University of Alberta

'Fisheries Crisis?' Discourse and Practice in a Fishing Community in Nova Scotia

by

Linda Jennifer Brooymans

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Abstract

This thesis is a critical examination of what is commonly referred to as the "fisheries crisis" of Atlantic Canada. In particular I examine how practice and discourse of people in Lockeport Nova Scotia challenge official discourse on the crisis. Two case studies illuminate the difference between local and wider constructions of the fishery. The first case study on the Women's Fishnet organization, and the second case study on the practice of women fishing with their husbands, demonstrates differing ways in which the two constructions interpolate with each other. Methods for data collection include participant observation and qualitative interviews. Overall I find that the crisis concept doesn't move readily across different realms, such as social, political, and economic, and that a nuanced understanding of local conditions is required.

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Introduction

This thesis is about women, a changing fishery, and the crisis discourse in the coastal community of Lockeport, Nova Scotia. From May to July in 2003 I conducted participant observation and interview-based research in this community. It is widely understood that fishing as an economic activity today is not what is was a generation ago. These changes are often characterised as a crisis state. It has been suggested that women have been particularly affected by these changes. Through two case studies I will examine this relationship.

This thesis developed out of my experiences in the coastal community of Lockeport, Nova Scotia. I had come to the community to study the effects of the North Atlantic Fisheries Crisis on gendered practice and discourse, but I had one problem: the people of Lockeport said that they did not and had not experienced the fisheries crisis. While they had experienced their share of ups and downs, I was told, these experiences did not constitute a crisis . Though this at first appeared to me as a rather unfortunate state of affairs in terms of my research project, I realised that I was being presented with the opportunity to examine the concept of crisis more thoroughly, particularly in relation to people's everyday experience. Crisis is constructed in multiple ways and in relation to a variety of factors, and thus to speak of crisis we need to apprehend the ways in which it is constructed so as to understand the

meaning of the term in the context of its usage. If the fisheries crisis did not relate to people's lived experience, where had it developed, and what specifically was it referring to? My thesis attempts to outline the development of the fisheries crisis discourse in the media and in academic works. It shows that the model which guides the interpretation of the fishery that underlies the construction of this crisis discourse is not the same model as most people in Lockeport have of the fishery.

In spite of the fact that the people of Lockeport do not generally articulate their experiences and understandings of the fishery in terms of crisis, this does not mean that the wider crisis discourse has not interpolated with their own practices and discourses. Two case studies will provide examples of how the crisis discourse has entered and affected the community, and how these two constructions of the 'fishery as economy' articulate with each other in people's practice and discourse. A case study approach provides the means to examine this relationship in close detail, and the two provided in my thesis allow for the complexities of the relationship to be demonstrated.

The first case study concerns the development of an organisation in the community called Women's Fishnet, which followed from Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) research project that examined the effects of the fisheries crisis on the health and well-being of women in Lockeport and other Nova Scotian coastal communities. As stated in their Project Report, "Women's Health and Well-being in Six Nova Scotia

communities" the changes were described as the "collapse of the groundfishery in the early 1990s and changes in fishing policies and practices (2001:I)". The link made between the fisheries crisis and women's well-being was that the political and economic restructuring had resulted in stresses within homes and communities that were particularly affecting women because of the lack of formal structural support for women in relation to these changes. The report revealed a series of identified stresses and changes that the participants had named such as , "increasing alienation and isolat[ion] in their communities(Ibid: i)", and "experiencing increasing negativity and more family stress which sometimes shows up in problems such as gambling addiction, substance abuse, or domestic violence (Ibid: ii)". In 1999, under the guidance and imperatives of the CRIAW, two community researchers for the project were given government funding to form a Lockeport branch of the Fishnet organization. And yet few women in the community have participated in Lockeport's Fishnet. I argue that this is because Fishnet represents a perception of the fishery and the fisheries crisis, that does not resonate with current local perceptions.

The second case study examines the relatively new practice of women fishing with their husbands, a practice which has developed in part through the restructuring of the fishery because of the 'crisis'. Changes to the quota system for certain groundfish species such as halibut and hake, and increases in the costs of running a fishing crew made it more and more difficult for

inshore fishermen to break even in their fishing enterprises. This restructuring of the fishery, which was meant to rationalise the fishery and make it more efficient, to deal with the problem of 'too many fishermen chasing too few fish' (Grzetic, 2004: 8) caused some fishermen to develop new and different strategies to maintain their fishing enterprise. For some fishermen their strategy was to have their wife or girlfriend fish with them so as to cut the cost of hiring a deckhand. This means that income which would have been lost to the deckhand's share stays within the household, and it also means that the wife or girlfriend will be able to collect Employment Insurance. What the practice of women fishing in Lockeport demonstrates, though, is not that the crisis experience has forced them into fishing with their husbands, but rather that it has presented them with an opportunity to do something which might not otherwise have developed owing to the highly gendered associations within the fishery.

While the case of Fishnet demonstrates the way in which a lack of shared perspectives, or more importantly the lack of an understanding from within, can impact policies and programs, the example of women fishing with their husbands demonstrates the ways in which these policies and programs can in turn have a structuring effect on local practices and understandings.

Theoretical Orientation

I have oriented my thesis within a practice-theory framework, developed primarily by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Marshall Sahlins (1976, 1981) and elaborated in relation to economy by Antonius Robben (1989). In particular I use this practice-centred approach in examining 'the economic' and how it is constructed, reproduced, and transformed through discourse and practice. Robben and Sahlins in particular emphasise how practice and discourse form a dialectical relationship which frames our understanding of the economic. It is the examination of local discourse and practice that frames my challenge of the 'fisheries crisis' discourse.

Robben summarises the practice theory perspective with clarity:

> Practice theory postulates the primacy of practice over reflection and cognition. Culture exists first and foremost in what people do, not just in what they say or think about their routine or in the cognitive models that are often believed to pattern their actions. Instead of analyzing symbols, rituals, social systems, deep structures, or historical processes, practice theory focuses on ways of coping in the world, on practice as people's interpretation of defining themselves socially and culturally. [...] The argument behind this radical standpoint is that people do not need explanations and guidelines when practices are performed successfully. [1989:7]

Habitual practices may develop structural properties, that are not necessarily discursively or consciously recognised (Sahlins, 1981: 67;Bourdieu, 1977). People can develop interpretations of these structural properties, which become the basis of cultural frames. These frames have the effect of structuring practice, but, as Sahlins recognises, "the worldly circumstances of

human action are under no inevitable obligation to conform to the categories by which certain people perceive them (1981: 67)." What is more, others may have contradictory interpretations of the same practices, and thus discourse is also quite significant (Robben, 1989: 10). This leads to the potential for the cultural frames to be revalued, both through practice, and through discourse. Practice theory presents the opportunity to go beyond the analysis of the 'structures' of cultural symbols and models, and allows us to examine the centrality of practice in producing, reproducing, and transforming these structures.

On a more philosophic level, however, my thesis presents some interesting questions regarding the nature of theoretical knowledge and its relation to practical and experiential knowledge. It is the nature of theoretical knowledge in the social sciences that allows one to assume one can know the people we study perhaps better than they know themselves, or at least in a different way than they know themselves. Very few acknowledge this today, yet it is fundamental to the concept of social science: we attempt to make generalisations or see structures and patterns that people may not see or make themselves. But what is the status of these generalisations and interpretations, how do we assess their validity or legitimacy?

This question is particularly relevant to anthropology insofar as it attempts to understand 'Culture', which I will loosely define as the process through which differing ways of understanding and interacting with the

world is achieved. Theories relating to culture have often attempted to explain the process by which we come to view the world in the way that we do, for instance interpretive theories such as functionalism, structuralism or materialism. They reference culture in relation to something outside of itself. Experience is described in light of a theoretical framework. This is problematic in reference to internal understandings and interpretations of events, something which phenomenological anthropologist Michael Jackson succinctly states:

> Anthropology has always tended to drift into the kind of abstractions and reifications that might define and justify its identity as a social science. Terms such as society, habitus, and culture can all too easily obscure the life worlds they are supposed to cover, and we must continually remind ourselves that social life is lived at the interface of self and other despite the fact that anonymous conceptual and material objects are sedimented there. If we are not to eclipse the interpersonal and intersubjective lifeworlds that we enter and struggle to understand as ethnographers, we must resist fetishizing the vocabularies that we have evolved to define our goals, explicate our methods, and theorize our findings. Just as any person is as manifold and several as the relationships in which he or she plays a part, so human reality is far more relational, various, and interconnected than bounded, atomistic concepts like 'nation,' 'society,' and 'culture' imply. [Jackson, 1998: 35]

According to Bourdieu (1977), the abstract / intentional sense consists of the models which a rationalisation of the practical sense has inculcated, and the practical understanding of the agent is just that, practical rather than theoretical:

> The explanations agents may provide of their own practice, thanks to quasi- theoretical reflections on their practice,

> conceals, even from their own eyes, the true nature of their practical mastery, i.e. that it is learned ignorance, a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles. It follows that this learned ignorance can only give rise to misleading discourse of a speaker himself misled, ignorant of both the objective truth about his practical mastery (which is that it is ignorant of its own truth) and of the true principle of the knowledge his practical mastery contains. [Bourdieu 1977: 18-19]

Bourdieu argues that the objective structures or relations that can be determined in the practices of 'agents' cannot be fully apprehended by those agents, only "in profile, i.e. in the form of relations that present themselves only one by one (1977: 18)". When we take these two issues into consideration – the problems of generalising for the sake of theoretical understanding, and the problems of intersubjectivity – the challenges of the anthropologist are great, but this is so only because we see the importance of developing such an 'understanding within' as part of our aim to understand human experience in the world.

Description of Community

Lockeport is a coastal community located in Shelburne county on the south shore of Nova Scotia. The land is rocky and the soil is acidic, and there has never been any agriculture in the area, aside from a few backyard vegetable gardens. Lockeport has many fine sand beaches, one of which, Crescent Beach, is over a mile long and was formerly pictured on Canada's 50

dollar bill. The province as a whole has invested an infrastructure directed towards tourism, which is regarded as one of its major industries, and which is seen as presenting a viable economic alternative to the declining fisheries. Lockeport's Crescent beach was known in the past to attract wealthy Nova Scotians in the later summer months when the water warms up enough for more daring people to swim in. Despite having a beautiful tourist information facility, and several tourist cabins along the beach, Lockeport gets very few tourists, which suits most people in the town just fine. While the income from tourism would be nice, having strangers roaming the town strikes most people as bothersome. There is a school in Lockeport for both elementary and secondary students, of which there are approximately 100. The Unemployment rate currently stands at 14 %, slightly higher than the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2001). Most people work in the fishing industry, either in the larger Clearwater Industries fishplant (which has 250 employees), or in one of the other three fish or lobster packing plants (which have 50 employees or less each), or as fishermen. Others work in the service industry, at the local shops, the post office, or the bank. There is also a small electronics assembly factory, which employs approximately 30 people. On the wharves in and around Lockeport, there are 58 inshore boats, and three offshore boats.

As people described it me, Lockeport today has declined, both in terms of population and in terms of amenities, in comparison with the 60's and 70's.

This is largely because of the tumultuous history of the fishplants in town, several of which have either burned down or gone bankrupt over the course of several decades. There is no longer a movie theatre in town, or the variety of grocery stores and clothing stores as there were in the past. There is one grocery store in town, and people go there only when they don't want to drive 25 minutes to go to the Sobey's in neighbouring Shelburne. There is one diner with a bowling alley, though the alley was closed during my stay. There is another fish and chips diner right on Lockeport harbour, which is very popular during the lunch hour, as it is in the centre of town and beside the Clearwater plant. Lockeport no longer has the bustle that people said it did thirty years ago: it now has the slow steady pace of small-town life.

Methodological Considerations

The methods used for my research were participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. The premises that underlie the logic of anthropological field methods, and the anthropological project as a whole, are worth examining. While most agree that ethnography is the defining feature of anthropological understanding, there is no universal agreement as to how ethnographic methods articulate with theoretical knowledge. Epistemologically there is a tendency to favour experiential and practical knowledge over theoretical or abstractly derived knowledge. And yet, most would not describe the status of the experiential knowledge that

ethnographers go in search of as being 'objective', in the way that knowledge is understood in the natural sciences.

Empirical falsifiability is not the reason why experiential knowledge is favoured in anthropology. Most anthropologists recognise the influence of their own subjectivity in the process of research, though none would claim that we are altogether victims of our own subjectivity. Experience and meaning, though perhaps not duplicatable, are in many ways translatable.

When it comes to gaining insight into human experience, then, there is more to understanding than providing external, empirical accounts: to have a greater understanding we need to have an account of the 'internal' as well, if not more so than, the external. What is the relationship between this internal world of our thoughts, beliefs, and sentiments, and the external world that we live in? There are few today who espouse a strict determinism or materialism; most people agree that the 'rules' of custom and convention are not simply extensions of the rules of nature. Perhaps most importantly we recognise that while humans do follow rules and conventions (constituted by others) there are multiple ways that we interpret and act on such rules and conventions.

Ethnographic fieldwork, then, is not a matter of testing hypotheses through empirical observation, but rather is an attempt to gain an understanding of the inner world of human experience as well. Indeed, anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins argue that this inner world – or

cultural realm – structures and shapes (but does not determine) the way we perceive and interact with the external world.

The original intention of my research was to examine, through participant observation, the effects of the fisheries crisis on gender identity and gender relations, as seen in discourse and practice. Bourdieu states that in regards to local discourses, "Native experience of the social world never apprehends the system of objective relations other than in profiles (1977: 18)." Practice, according to this understanding, embodies a cultural logic that is never fully articulated in discourse, because the knowledge embedded in practice is taken for granted, or naturalised. What is more, according to this perspective, changes in objective structures can force a change in practice, which might lead to a challenge to this naturalised or practical knowledge, and hence call for a theoretical account of it from within the society or community. To examine whether there is a disjuncture between practice and discourse, and how this is or is not being dealt with by the community, requires an extended presence within the community so as to be able to observe such distinctions.

In the process of preparing for my research I made contact with the office manager of Women's Fishnet. I intended to make this organisation and the women involved in it a central focus of my research, in combination with a more general examination of women's involvement in the fishery. My interest in Women's Fishnet was that it represented an apparent

development of a critical discourse which Bourdieu discusses in crisis contexts. I wanted to discover the roots of this critical discourse, and how it made sense of the fisheries crisis.

It is a testament to ethnographic methods, and the primary importance it places on understanding cultural and social contexts from within, that my research plan and research goals did not succeed according to my original intentions. I had conceived of a very interesting and intricate question regarding women's role in the fishery in terms of the relationship between discourse and practice that simply had no relevance in relation to the experiences and perceptions of the men and women in the community. I had conceived of Women's Fishnet as providing a critical discourse, and that owing to the fact that such an organisation existed in such a small community there would be a clear and identifiable local understanding of the relationship between women and the fishery. What I discovered was that while women's Fishnet did exist within the community there was little community involvement, and that it had been developed primarily as a result of the efforts of a group of academic researchers with no substantive ties to the community.

Needless to say my research period was a process of frustration, discovery, and more frustration. My confidence in the overriding truth of theoretical insight had been overturned within the first few weeks of what I came to consider (with some panic) an incredibly short research period. Due

perhaps mostly to my own character (or perhaps simply to the nature of ethnography itself) it took some time for me to concede that my experience did not match what theoretical presuppositions had caused me to anticipate; without my theoretical grounding I found it difficult to contextualize what I was observing and hearing. In time, however, I came to see how invaluable my (unanticipated) experience was: I was gaining a deeper insight into people's understandings and experiences, I was forced to be more reflexive toward my own understandings and experiences, and I realised the insight that ethnographic field methods provide.

During my research period I was fortuitously billeted with an older American lady who had taken up residence in Lockeport almost twenty years before. In spite of her 81 years, she was an active member of the community, a volunteer and organiser for several community groups. Maggie had sharp insight into community life and I enjoyed many evenings in conversation with her. She was incredibly helpful in introducing me to most of the people that I met, sometimes going as far as to harangue someone to agree to be interviewed by me, in exchange for free labour at community lobster dinners and other events (to which I more than willingly obliged). In my nine week stay I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews: four interviews with the women in the community who were fishing with their husbands; two interviews with women involved in Fishnet; one interview with a gentleman who was considered the local historian; four interviews with men who were

(or had in the past been) involved in the fishery, both inshore and offshore; two interviews with men from the community who were not directly involved in the fishery; one interview with a former DFO official; and two interviews with women from the community who had no direct involvement in the fishery. My questions in the interviews centred around people's experiences in Lockeport generally, with focus on the history of the fishery and the role of women in the community and the fishery. Almost half of the interviewees chose not to be recorded, stating that either it made them self-conscious, or they had concerns about the sensitivity of what they were saying. On average interviews were about one and a half hours long, though a few lasted an entire afternoon. Unfortunately, I was unable to gain access to the perspective of women who worked for the local fish processing plant, and feel that this is a significant, though not crippling, gap in my research. The women who work at the fish plant had no involvement with Fishnet, and engaged with the community only in the context of familial and household relations: they were much too private and exclusive for me to have any significant interaction with during my nine week stay.

Although my interviews are hardly of statistical significance, I found that they largely cohered with the many in-depth conversations I had had with various people in the community during my stay. Interviews tended to make people nervous, and while people whom I came to know as friends would never agree to be interviewed, they were always approaching me

informally with information that they thought might be helpful. Of course it should be noted that due to the fact that I was only in town for the period of a few months, the people with whom I had these conversations were generally of a certain frame of mind: while there was no real socio-economic or other relatable pattern they were generally all people who had taken the time to consider their lives and the world around them to an extent which I found quite remarkable. The research I conducted in Lockeport during the summer is in my view only a scratch on the surface of the complexities of the practice and discourse of the people of Lockeport.

The media review, which I used in my analysis of the construction of the wider fisheries crisis discourse was done through the Pro-quest Canadian Newsstand database, available through the University of Alberta library. The database holds records for over 190 Canadian news sources. My search parameters were for the subject 'Atlantic Fishery' post-1982 for which there were 4122 documents, and subject 'Atlantic Fishery Crisis' post-1982, for which there were 568 documents.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter One of the thesis examines the concept of crisis through the writings of Habermas and Bourdieu, identifying the importance of understanding crisis as being embedded within the experience of the subject rather than simply viewing it as an objective state or as systemic. It then

goes on to analyse the way in which the North Atlantic Fisheries Crisis has been constructed within the media, and utilised by academic researchers. I argue that an understanding of crisis in the fishery must first come to terms with the way the fishery as economy is interpreted and acted upon by people from the community.

Chapter Two describes local constructions of Lockeport's history as a means of examining the way people in Lockeport understand what constitutes the fishery. It then uses this examination to argue that the people of Lockeport do not consider that they are or have experienced a fisheries crisis.

Chapter Three presents the case study on the Women's Fishnet Organization as an avenue for examining in closer detail the ways in which the fishery crisis discourse interpolates with local conceptions of the fishery. I argue that in framing local experience as crisis the CRIAW researchers supposed a latent necessity to change that would be realised through Fishnet, and that in not situating its objectives within the local production and significance of gossip, the more prevalent form of communication than formalised public discourse, it was not able to deal with the practical issues surrounding community participation.

Chapter Four presents the case study of the relatively new practice of women fishing with their husbands in the inshore lobster fishery. This presents another detailed analysis of the interpolation of the crisis discourse

with local conceptions of the fishery, but in this instance reveals the way some members of the community have strategized and adapted their practices in relation to the crisis discourse.

In the conclusions I reexamine the basis of my arguments for the two case studies in relation to my methodology, with a view towards its limitations and potentials for future research. I also offer some concluding remarks about the usefulness of the crisis concept in regards to the fishery, and in regards to people's everyday experiences in the fishery.

Overall, the thesis endeavours to demonstrate how the fisheries crisis has been constructed and how it interpolates with people's everyday practice and discourse in a coastal fishing community.

Chapter One: The Discourse of Crisis and Experience

In this chapter I examine the meaning of the crisis concept, and attempt to demonstrate that it is generally used in an unreflective manner in the fisheries crisis discourse by describing how the 'fisheries crisis' was constructed by the media, and in turn reproduced by academic research. This contributes to my overall argument because in showing how the fisheries crisis discourse was constituted, I can demonstrate how it is not rooted in the experiences and understandings of people in communities such as Lockeport.

The phrase 'North Atlantic Fisheries Crisis' or just simply the 'fisheries crisis' has become pervasive in characterising and assessing a variety of issues relating to the fishery; indeed it is apparently difficult to speak of the Atlantic fishery without making reference to 'the crisis' and most social science academic discourse on the Atlantic region utilises the term or operates under the assumption that 'crisis' reflects an objective reality (Macdonald and Connelly, 1989; Palmer, 1996; Davis, 2000). Throughout, the crisis concept is used unproblematically and rarely are the components of crisis defined or described in detailed examples. Few authors have unpacked what they mean by crisis and the term is used broadly to characterise all of the region, despite the very different histories, economies and cultures of the four Atlantic provinces. To what extent does the term 'crisis' accurately

characterise the situation in the differing coastal communities of Atlantic Canada? And to what extent does it relate to the experience of community members? What are the parameters or conditions that help to define crisis, and how does the incorporation of 'crisis' into discourse affect the way the fishery and fishing communities are understood and dealt with? Discussion of the crisis concept in relation to a fishery community in Lockeport Nova Scotia, serves to highlight distinctions in the way economy, in particular the fishing economy, is conceptualised both internally and externally. The unproblematic incorporation of 'crisis' into wider discourses can be understood in terms of a reductionist and compartmentalised understanding of economy and the relationship of the 'economic' to wider socio-cultural aspects.

1.1: Defining the Crisis Concept

Linguistically, crisis is defined as "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which an abrupt or decisive change is impending" (Merriam-Webster Collegiate, 2004) ". Conceptually it has perhaps best been described by Habermas (1975) and Bourdieu (1977). In Legitimation Crisis, Habermas explicates the crisis concept:

> Prior to its employment as a social-scientific term, the concept of crisis was familiar to us from its medical usage. In that context it refers to the phase of an illness in which it is decided whether the self-healing powers of the organism are sufficient for recovery. The critical process, the illness, seems to be something

> objective. (...) How the patient feels and how he experiences his illness is at most a symptom of events that he himself can barely influence. Nevertheless, we would not speak of a crisis in a medical situation of life or death if the patient were not trapped in this process with all of his subjectivity. A crisis cannot be separated from the victim's inner view. *He experiences his impotence toward the objectivity of his illness only because he is a subject doomed to passivity and temporarily unable to be a subject in full possession of his strength.* Crisis suggests the notion of an objective power depriving the subject of part of his normal sovereignty. If we interpret a process as crisis, we are tacitly giving it a normative meaning. [Habermas, 1975: 1. italics my own]

Habermas then goes on to situate the crisis concept in aesthetics:

> In classical aesthetics from Aristotle to Hegel, crisis signifies the turning point of a fateful process which, although fully objective, does not simply break in from the outside. There is a contradiction expressed in the catastrophic culmination of a conflict of action, and that *contradiction is inherent in the very structure of the system of action* and in the personality systems of the characters. [Ibid: 2, italics my own]

This sense of internal and inherent contradiction is carried forward particularly with reference to Marx, who formulated his theory of economic process around the concept of crisis, or the contradictions inherent in economic growth. In the social sciences today, Habermas argues that a systems approach is taken to crisis, with the understanding that, "crises arise when the structure of a social system allows fewer possibilities for problem solving than are necessary to the continued existence of the system (Ibid: 2)", which he calls problems of 'system integration'. Habermas argues that this perspective does not acknowledge the issue of inherent structural

contradiction within systems as the cause of crisis, which itself requires that we are able to identify the essential structures of these systems. Other elements of the system may change without the system losing its identity, and it is this lack of recognition in the systems theory perspective of crisis that causes Habermas to say that this theory is essentially useless.

Habermas is basing his argument on his recognition of the complexities of social systems, and that social systems are able to modify themselves in order to continue their existence in a way that can make their identity blurred, with the result that, "it cannot be unambiguously determined whether a new system has been formed or the old system has merely regenerated itself (Ibid: 2)," and hence "the range of tolerance within which the goal values of a social system can vary without critically endangering its continued existence or losing its identity obviously cannot be grasped from the objectivistic view point of systems theory (ibid: 2)." Crisis, then is not located within the system but, as the medical example indicates, is embedded within the subject.

> Only when members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can we speak of crises. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when the consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic. Crisis states assume the form of a disintegration of social institutions. [Habermas, 1975: 3]

It is the proper identification of the relationship between social integration and system integration that leads to the most appropriate conception of crisis. While Habermas' explication of the development of the concept of crisis was directed toward a generalised understanding of the structural features of late capitalism, it provides a foundation for the examination of the fisheries crisis. Habermas' examination points towards the importance of subjective definition of the realm of the economic, and what constitutes the subject's position vis a vis the fishery. The objectivity of the crisis is dependant on the way the subject defines and hence contextualises his objective experience.

Bourdieu's explication of crisis is in many ways similar. His understanding of crisis is that:

> The relationship between language and experience never appears more clearly than in crisis situations in which the everyday order (Alltaglichkeit) is challenged, and with it the language of order, situations which call for an extraordinary discourse (...) capable of giving systematic expression to the gamut of extra-ordinary experiences that this, so to speak, objective epoche has provoked or made possible [Bourdieu, 1977:170]

Bourdieu states that the universe of discourse exists in relation to the unexpressed and unformulated, but accepted without scrutiny, universe of '*doxa*'. A crisis develops when "the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence *practically* (1977: 169)." It is in the realm of practice where the discord is first

experienced, and through this a critical discourse may emerge[1]. Bourdieu seems to formulate more explicitly what Habermas suggests, that it is our subjective understanding of what is normative, of which we are not necessarily self-conscious, and its interpolation with its objective conditions that leads to a crisis of practice. A crisis of practice, however, need not develop into a crisis in discourse. One can question *doxa* through alterations in practice, but this need not constitute a critical questioning of *doxa*, a transformation in understanding. The distinction to be made then is that crisis in discourse necessarily confronts a subjectively understood and inherent contradiction, whereas alterations in practice do not necessarily lead to transformations of understanding.

Crisis, then, is embedded in subjective experience, and discursively formulated and constituted. According to Colin Hay in his article "Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the 'Winter of Discontent'" (1996):

> Those who are able to define what the crisis is all about hold the key to defining the appropriate strategies for [its] resolution. Crisis [...] is not some objective condition or property of a system defining the contours for subsequent ideological contestation. Rather, it is subjectively perceived and hence brought into existence through narrative and discourse. [1996: 255]

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[1] He goes on, however, to recognise that "Crisis is a necessary condition for the questioning of *doxa* but it is not in itself a sufficient condition for the production of a critical discourse (ibid, 169)."

An aspect of particular theoretical interest regarding an understanding of 'crisis' is the process by which the destruction of practical self-evidence becomes identified as crisis. In reflection on the practice of social science and its effects in the 'real world', however, more interesting is the manner in which the internalisation of 'crisis' shapes one's interpretation of a situation.

Hay articulates a theory on the way in which crisis becomes constructed, that contributes significantly to Habermas' and Bourdieu's examinations of crisis:

> Crises are representations and hence 'constructions' of failure. A given constellation of contradictions and failures within institutions [...] can sustain a multiplicity of conflicting narratives of crisis. Such narratives compete in terms of their ability to find resonance with individuals' and groups' direct, lived experiences, and not in terms of their 'scientific' adequacy as explanations for the condition they diagnose. In doing so, crisis discourses operate by identifying minor alterations in the routine texture of social life, recruiting such iterative changes as 'symptomatic' of a generic condition of (...) failure. Through this process of ideological contestation a predominant construction of crisis may emerge. The crisis becomes lived in these terms. [1996: 255]

While Hay is describing the narration of crisis in regards to the particulars of state politics, his description of the narrative being reliant on popular appeal as opposed to 'scientific adequacy' is relevant to the North Atlantic Fisheries crisis discourse, in particular the manner in which the narrative expanded from an economic/ ecological crisis in Newfoundland, to a political and socio-

cultural crisis that spanned the Maritime region. The persuasiveness of the narrative is derived from its ability to appeal to the general public's perceptions and prejudices over and above its relaying of the actual situation: interpreted in terms of Bourdieu this would mean the ability to make sense of one's sense of discord between the subjective and objective structures . The perceptions and prejudices that helped constitute the Fisheries crisis narrative were the already latent in regionalism and popular conceptions of the urban/ rural divide.

1.2 : Understanding the North Atlantic fisheries crisis: Economy as practice

Descriptions of the concept and discursive constitution of crisis provided by Bourdieu, Habermas, and Hay present a basis by which we can examine the development and influence of the Atlantic fisheries crisis discourse and its impacts, in terms of research and policy, as well as give a basis for understanding why 'crisis' was not used within the local discourse of the south shore town of Lockeport, Nova Scotia. One needs to examine the way people interpret their experience in relation to changes in objective structures to determine there is a crisis state. What needs to be considered in any examination of the fisheries crisis in terms of communities, is how the fishery is conceptualised: is the fishery simply regarded as a compartmentalised 'economic' practice, or is it representative of a way of life ?

In terms of how the fishery is conceptualised and interpreted outside of the community, economists and historians such as Gene Barrett describe the history of the Atlantic fishery in reference to capital accumulation as having gone through short swings of instability and long swings of relatively stable accumulation (Barrett, 1992; see also MacDonald, 1984). The consideration of the 'Atlantic Fishery' as a generalised area of research is problematic insofar as it elides significant differences between areas regarding the fishery. Macdonald (1984), and Halliday, Peacock, and Burke (1992), acknowledged that for the five provinces along the Atlantic coast access to the once abundant groundfish resources (the four most commercially important groundfish species being Cod, Haddock, Pollock and Redfish) has always been variable, owing to the presence or absence of ice-free ports, proximity to markets, and the fact that the species congregate and disperse in different places at different times of the year. Indeed even different areas within the same province have more or less profitable fisheries. In addition to this, different areas along the coast of the Atlantic have more or less diversified fisheries in regards to species 'harvested'. Thus, while they historically have harvested from the same general stocks, they have done so to different extents and with differing levels of success.

Nonetheless, in examinations of the Atlantic fishery it is argued that fishing, in comparison with other forms of production, is unstable and crisis ridden (Schrank, Roy, Ommer and Skoda, 1992; Apostle, Barrett, et al. 1998).

These descriptions of crisis present the fishery in strictly economic terms, i.e. as the result of a market-oriented system of production, and measures the success of this economy in terms of levels of monetary profit, levels of production and efficiency, and levels of labour input and employment . While it may make sense within these strictly defined terms to describe the economy of the fishery as being periodically in crisis, this is not a conception of the fishing economy shared by all. Substantive economic anthropologists have long argued against situating economy as divorced from cultural and social factors. Antonius Robben states in the introduction to his book Sons of the Sea Goddess, that there is a need to, "challenge the persistent myth that the economy is a bounded domain of society and culture that therefore can be truthfully represented in models, structures, laws, and principles (1990: 2)." Economies, or the 'economic', are constituted and hence defined by and within the cultural and social contexts in which it exists. Therefore, any socially relevant discussion of crisis in the fishery should come from within these understandings. As Marshall Sahlins aptly states in Culture and Practical Reason, "An 'economic basis' is a symbolic scheme of practical activity – not just the practical scheme in symbolic activity(1976: 37)."

It seems that the crisis discourse virtually reverses this understanding of economy and the 'economic'. This perspective treats the economy as a bounded system of functional relations, with social/ cultural aspects being determined by economic conditions. These approaches do not start from the

point of people's practices and discourses, in contrast to approaches such as Robben's, which considers that, "The economy is constituted through practice and reconstituted through its dialectic with discourse" (Robben 1990: 2). It is unlikely that the dissociation of economy from other aspects of life, which occurs in such analyses and interpretations of crisis, reflects a similar dissociation in people's everyday lived experience.

1.2.1: The construction of the Fisheries Crisis: the Use of Regionalism and the Single-Industry town

The first mentions of crisis in national and local newspapers across Canada occurred in 1988. The Ottawa Citizen, the Toronto Star, the Calgary Herald, and the Financial Post made reference to the declining cod stocks along the Grand Banks, with such story lines as "Stocks Depleted: Elusive Villain of cod crisis" (Ottawa Citizen: May 24, 1989), "East Coast Fishing Crisis" (Calgary Herald: June 05, 1989), and "Pressure Builds on Atlantic Fishery: Dwindling Stocks put communities in peril" (Financial Post: June 12, 1989)[2] . These headlines herald a particular image of Atlantic Canada as a zone of peril – social, cultural, economic – grounded in the ecological variability of fishing as a means of making a living. These portrayals also

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[2] see also: The Windsor Star, Dec.22, 1989; Windsor Star, Dec. 19, 1989; Ottawa Citizen, Dec. 14, 1989; ******

play into a long-standing representation of fishing and fishing communities as parochial, folkloric and premodern (see Mackay, 1994). The question of the health of the Atlantic fishery had developed during the 1970s, with increasing numbers of foreign boats competing with Canadian fishermen off the Grand banks and George's Bank. The extension of Canadian jurisdiction in 1977 was meant to protect both the interests of the Canadian fishing industry and the fish stocks in the area. Scientists were employed by the DFO to measure the health of the stocks, at the same time as the government and industry were 'rationalising' the fishery with more 'efficient' technologies. Owing to the difficulties of determining the health of ground fish stocks because of the myriad of environmental factors involved, the process of determining quotas favoured the more optimistic predictions. As Kent Blades argues in his polemic, Net Destruction:

> The industry was optimistic that the domestic harvest would soar with the expulsion of the foreign fleets; this expectation was a factor considered by some scientists when making their predictions on stock health. Divergent forecasts were being floated by scientists in the early 1980s. One forecast indicated that ground fish stocks, in particular northern cod stocks, were facing decline while another indicated stocks were increasing dramatically. [Blades, 1995: 137]

The government attempts to rationalise the industry, focusing on the greater efficiency of more capital intensive strategies, and the surrounding rhetoric made the depletion of the ground fish stocks a sensational event. The DFO's assessments of fish stocks, with miscalculations as to the abundance of fish

throughout the eighties did not bear with the experience of the fishermen, who were catching not only fewer, but also smaller fish (see Apostle, Barrett, et al., 1998). Nonetheless, as late as 1987, large corporations with huge fishing fleets, i.e. National Sea Products, were reporting high profits, and predicting even higher ones in the future (Financial Post: Aug. 24, 1987; Windsor Star: Dec. 19, 1987).

The use of 'crisis' in the early coverage of the fishery's situation emerged primarily in newspaper coverage outside of the Atlantic region and made reference to the prevalence of contradictions and contestations in assessing the situation, first in terms of the validity of claims made, and later in terms of the causes and the impending effects of what was gaining increasing consensus as being an ecological/ economic crisis [3]. It is interesting to note that the crisis narrative first developed outside of the region, where people's understandings of the situation are simplified by distance and a view of the region and homogenous. The multiplicity of narratives in the late 1980s and early 1990s became unified, in the sense that it existed within and outside the Atlantic region and referred to a state of crisis that was social, political, economic, and ecological. By 1994 it was becoming increasingly clear

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[3] see Financial Post: May 18, 1989 "No one wins if Atlantic fish issue mishandled"; Vancouver Sun, Dec. 19, 1987 "Confusion reigned as Atlantic Fishery was almost destroyed"; Ottawa Citizen: Nov. 7, 1986 "Agreement near on better reporting of Fish catches".

that it would take an extended period of time before fish stocks would be back to harvestable levels (some doubt whether or not this will occur at all)[4].

The strength and persuasiveness of the crisis narrative for the ground fish fishery is readily apparent if one restricts one's view just to the industry : in 1995 the Senate committee on Fisheries reported scientific surveys in 1991of the northern cod stock had declined by about one half from the previous year, and had declined by four-fifths between 1993 and 1994 (SCOF, 1995) . The 1992 cod moratorium, and subsequent quota reductions or moratoria on other ground fish species crippled the Atlantic industry – an estimated 50,000 fisheries workers throughout Atlantic Canada lost their jobs because of these changes (Grzetic, 2004: 8). The sensation that this drastic collapse created became the narration of a crisis not simply of the ground fish fishery, but of the Atlantic fishery as a whole, and then of the communities in the Atlantic provinces. In other words, the crisis narrative became increasingly expansive between the period of 1989 and the mid 1990s, to the point now, where the North Atlantic fisheries crisis is perceived as pertaining to economic, social and political contexts. Among social scientists the crisis and its "effects" are a common object of study in a way

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[4] see Ottawa Citizen: Sept. 03, 1993 "Fishery Crisis symptom of failure in Society"; Chronicle-Herald: Nov. 08, 1993 "Fishery Crisis taking toll on women"; Daily News: Nov. 07, 1993 "Coastal Communities in Nova Scotia adapt to survive fishery crisis"; Daily News: Oct. 23, 1993 "Fishery crisis spreading – rally"; Calgary Herald: Mar 22, 1994 "Fishery Crisis"; Daily News: Dec 07, 1993 "Marshall Plan urged for East Coast; Cod crisis 'catastrophe of biblical scale" .

that suggests a static state rather than a culturally informed understanding of economy.

Why has the crisis narrative expanded as it has? A partial explanation relates the media's perception of the Atlantic provinces in the context of the nation as a whole. The entrenched regionalism within the Canadian government's federalist system is a narrative of its own. In many ways the crisis narrative has been affixed to the construction of the Atlantic region within this national discourse since confederation, a narrative which has not necessarily developed from within the region itself but emerged hegemonically from the centre. A tendency to homogenize the distinctions between the various areas and provinces within the region has at least in part allowed for the crisis narrative to be expanded from Newfoundland, where the majority of the northern cod fishing industry existed, to the Maritime region as a whole.

Another factor in the expansion of the crisis discourse is the perception of the entire region as typified by the single-industry community. The concept of the 'single-industry' or 'resource dependent' community is a melding of the interpretation of economy as a bounded entity and the treatment of the social and cultural as determined by the economic. There is a tendency to generalise about the homogeneity of the economic structures in these communities, with the understanding being that other sectors play insignificant roles; that they are dependent on the industry or company and

hence vulnerable to its boom-bust cycles (see Randall and Ironside, 1996). This perception of resource dependent or single–industry towns can and has been applied to many of the coastal towns of the Atlantic provinces, most of which are tied to the fishery. The problems of resource dependence are the basis for the development of government programs such as the Atlantic Fisheries Adjustment Program, and the Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (known as TAGS), which aimed to promote economic diversification, and the effects of high unemployment in the early years of the moratorium.

While the conception of resource-dependency has played a part in the development of the fisheries crisis discourse, researchers are moving away from this monolithic and stereotypical understanding to recognise that, "beneath this apparent homogeneity is a community distinctiveness shaped by the particular resource sector that dominates economic life, by the degree of spatial isolation of the community, and by gender differences and degree of labour-force stability in these settings (Randall and Ironside, 1996: 34)." This seems to be a partial acknowledgement of the argument posed by substantive economic anthropologists like Sahlins and Robben insofar as it questions and challenges the validity of simplistic economic models. On the other hand, this recognition by geographers maintains a distinctly abstract sense of the economic, as opposed to locating it within the people's own understandings. While single-industry communities are vulnerable to the boom-bust cycles of their resource or industry dependence, the extent to which the people of the

community experience this as crisis is contingent on cultural and social factors which interpret this resource dependency within their understanding of what constitutes the economy. In other words, it is contingent on the way people define what constitutes making a living, and when they determine that they are no longer able to do so.

The expansion of the fisheries crisis narrative as being both regional and socio-cultural - speaking of communities 'living' the crisis - is problematic because it provides a ready framework for interpreting in a way that may not resonate with the experience of people in communities. The presentation of the economic within the discursive framework of the crisis and the understanding of the economic from the perspectives of people within the differing coastal communities of the 'Atlantic fishery' are not necessarily one and the same. In addition to this, one might also take argument with the presentation of the crisis because not all communities in the Atlantic region have been hit equally hard by the collapse of the groundfish fishery, as many regions in Nova Scotia have had a sufficiently diverse fishery so as to be able to accommodate the collapse with relatively few 'economic' repercussions. This is not to say that there are no communities whose people are experiencing crisis: many people from communities in Newfoundland and Labrador which were exclusively reliant on the northern cod fishery have described themselves as 'living the crisis' (see Davis 1993, and 2000). The issue in understanding the crisis is how people in the communities

understand what constitutes their fishing economy and the discourses and practices related to it.

Particularly relevant to academic discourse surrounding the crisis, is the tendency for the crisis narrative to totalise interpretations of communities. Insofar as the crisis narrative exists within a wider discourse (i.e. within the mainstream media), the necessary relationship of it to people's lived experience is presumptuous (though not irrelevant). The crisis narrative that has become widespread in the media is based upon a framework of ideas, and in points of reference, that are not necessarily incorporated into local narratives and discourses. Although the issue of globalisation and the relationship between the 'global' and the 'local' demonstrate that there is significant interplay between local and global narratives, it is naive to assume that local histories and praxis have no effect on the way these global processes are mediated and incorporated. The relationship between these two narratives, and how they become incorporated in people's everyday experience needs to be examined, not presumed. If people in differing communities experience crisis, how does this interpolate with the wider discourse?

1.3: Research on Women and the Fisheries Crisis

Much of the academic literature on the fisheries crisis has taken its cue from the wider crisis narrative that has emerged over the last decade. The concept of crisis has become a theoretical lens for interpreting the practices and discourses of people in affected communities, rather than seen as constructed through these practices and discourses. In 2000, the journal *Women's Studies International Forum* published an issue dealing specifically with the effects of the crisis on gender and gender relations. The editors situated articles in the special issue in relation to the crisis:

> The current fisheries crisis dates back to the 1980s but peaked for most of the North Atlantic in the early 1990s. (...) Changes in resource management policies have resulted in a radical restructuring of North Atlantic fisheries. The central goal is to derive more economic benefit from reduced, but sustainable stocks. The end result is a more industrialised fishery with fewer workers. The articles in this collection document both short and long-term consequences of these restructuring policies for nations, regions, communities, household families and individuals, who are involved in the extraction of Maritimes resources. Taken together they document that the net effect of such crisis policies is profound, pervasive, and deeply gendered. [Davis and Gerrard, 2000: 279]

Here, crisis is presented as an objective fact articulated primarily through 'crisis policies', in relation to the distinct and bounded realm of the 'economic', and thereby does not itself require interpretation or examination in regards to the processes of its constitution. Again, the problem in examining the

'effects' of crisis is that it fails to consider the way that crisis has come to be understood as such; as Habermas argues, crisis is contingent on people's experience of structural alterations as being critical to the maintenance of their identities. Without understanding the contexts and boundaries ascribed to the crisis from within, one can easily misrepresent the 'effects' of it. While the forum situated itself in terms of a simplistic understanding of crisis, the contributing authors all took different approached to their interpretations of crisis in their research.

One contributor to the WSIF issue, J. Nadel-Klein, makes partial reference to the condition of the crisis as it is constructed through local practice and discourse. Nadel-Klein states that for many fishing communities crisis is 'perpetual' and that, "The meaning of crisis may vary over the course of a community's history and may even be contested (2000: 364)." Nadel-Klein emphasizes, "the long-term context of what has always been a precarious way of life (2000:363)". Likewise,

> The techno-ecological problems of the past 20 years that have led to declining fish stocks and stricter regulations represent a new phase of difficulty for the fisherfolk. They themselves understand the moment to be part of a continual process of decline (...) [2000:363].

This addresses the relationship of 'decline' to the understanding of crisis. It appears from Habermas' perspective that the understanding of decline is related to, or a part of, crisis insofar as the self-identified normative structures of a society are seen to be losing their integrity in relation to

people's everyday experience as part of that society. On the other hand, the description of the risk attributed by the fisherfolk to their way of life, paradoxically indicates that disintegration, or the threat of disintegration has itself become normative.

Nadel-Klein associates the process of decline not simply with the fishery as industry, but with the fishery as related to a way of life. For the people living in coastal communities on the Eastern Shores of Scotland, the practice of fishing is seen as fundamental to the reproduction of symbolic schemes that in turn serve to reproduce local identities. Interestingly these local identities originally developed because they were an inversion of the stigma attached by others to fishing. Yet with fewer and fewer men fishing, local identities become reliant on the recognition and reproduction of these symbolic schemes without original context. This, Nadel-Klein argues, is what the crisis is for people in communities where she did her research.

As another contributing author, Marian Binkley's examination of the effects of the fisheries crisis is in many ways similar. Binkley' article in the WSI forum, titled 'Getting by in tough times' and her subsequent book on the same topic, Set Adrift (2003), are critiques of most fisheries research, which has a tendency to examine the fishery in terms of the direct production related to the fishery, such as harvesting and processing, but ignores the important indirect contribution to the fishery, made by the wives of men who work in the (primarily offshore) fishery, as well as the social and cultural

contexts of the fishery. Binkley is critical of what she sees as the narrowly defined economic crisis and argues that "the fisheries crisis in Atlantic Canada went beyond an environmental crisis in resources management to a crisis for coastal communities and their way of life (2002: 11)." However, she does not substantiate her claim of crisis except by outlining how the structural changes in the fishery had in turn changed different aspects of community and household life. What is necessary is to describe the relationship between system integration and social integration, or how the subjective structures are dissociated from the objective structures.

The contributing author to the WSIF who does approach the crisis concept from a subjective standpoint is Dona Davis in her article "Gendered Cultures of Conflict and Discontent: Living 'The Crisis' in a Newfoundland Community." Davis describes how prior to the cod moratorium in the research community there was a relatively distinct sexual division of labour, through which people derived their understandings of the fishery and its relation to the community. Gender roles were very much tied to productive practice, and understandings of the fishery were clearly gendered (Davis, 2000; Davis 1993). Men's and women's understandings of the nature of their relationship to each other were somewhat divergent, though there was no discursive conflict because of the complementarity of their practices. However, the changes in the fishery owing to the cod moratorium deeply affected people's – primarily men's – productive practice, and thereby also all

the understandings that had been connected to it. Because of the fact that men could no longer fish, the gendered terrain of community and household life, which was closely associated with the fishery, deteriorated. Davis' article clearly depicts the cultural understandings of the fishing economy, how they were embedded in practice and discourse, and how the transformations in objective structures clearly led to a dissonance with people's subjective structures, resulting in crisis.

Each of these three authors approached the concept of crisis differently. Davis' article clearly relates the concept of crisis to how local practice and discourse reproduce conceptions of the fishery, and how disruptions of that practice and discourse led to an inability for social reproduction of existing subjective structures. Nadel –Klein's article poses a question regarding how crisis should be understood in regards to local understandings of the fishery as being constantly under threat. The practices which constitute the fishery in Nadel-Klein's article (which she never explicitly states) have always been under threat of transformation. Binkley's article on the other hand, does not describe the fishery in terms of its being constituted or reproduced through practice and discourse. As such, the problem in her description of crisis is much like Habermas' criticism of the improper relation between social integration and system integration. Without an examination of the subjective structures as understood by people within

the community, you are not able to identify what is essential to the identity of the structure itself.

1.4: Discussion

It is not my position that the Fisheries crisis is mere fabrication, or that it does not have any effect on people lives, experiences, and understandings of the world. As Davis demonstrates through her ethnographic research, there are communities within the rather diverse Atlantic Fishery that have an understanding of crisis which has developed from within their practical and discursive worlds. In addition to this, the fisheries crisis most certainly does exist as it has been constituted by the media and government, two arenas which permeate the social world. It would be naive to assume that this discourse does not affect and interact with local discourses, with people's everyday practical and discursive frames. On the other hand, this narrative is a narrative unto itself and is not necessarily the narrative which people use to understand the goings-on of the fishery in the context of their everyday lives. A proper understanding of crisis then, would be an examination of the intersections of local and wider narrative frames.

The problem with the utilization of 'crisis' in academic discourse is the potential disconnect between the conceptual representation and the lived experience which it ostensibly is meant to represent. To speak of the crisis in

terms of social context, i.e. in terms of lived experience, requires having an understanding of how that lived experience has informed a sense of crisis. The manner in which the fisheries crisis discourse has developed, with its sense of the bounded economic domain which structures and determines the social and cultural realm, leads to a dissonance between conceptual representations (in the form of models) and the lived realities they are attempting to represent. It is this tendency in academic representation that Michael Jackson critiques in its predisposition to shift authority, "from direct testimony and immediate experience to abstract and imperiously panoptic forms of discursive practice (1998: 33)," a discursive practice which becomes so far removed from the direct experience it is trying to represent that it in turn misrepresents it.

Chapter Two: Understanding the Fishery through histories

In this chapter I will examine the way people in Lockeport conceive of and approach the fishery through their discourse about its history. Through their tendency to gloss over certain historical events, or even periods of Lockeport's history, I hope to show that their conception of the fishery is not simply based on developments and changes in the history, but that other cultural and political ideas underwrite their interpretations and representations . This will be the basis of my attempt to explain why people of the community state that they have not experienced the fisheries crisis.

Crisis, as a phenomenon, is necessarily historical: it exists in relation to a particularly understood past, a projected future, and a present situated within them. The crisis narrative is a narrative of discontinuity. In examining how the downturn in the fishery is experienced, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the way the community conceptualises and produces its history. As Friedman states in his article "the Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity" (1992), "The past is always practiced in the present, not because the past imposes itself, but because subjects in the present fashion the past in the practice of their social identity (1992: 853)." A history of Lockeport's fishery as it is constructed by the community demonstrates that their understanding of the fishery as economy

is embedded within or constituted by its social and cultural context. While there are those who do take an industry approach to the fishery, the large majority in Lockeport do not consider the fishery divorced from the socio-cultural context in which it is embedded. For them it is much as Robben states for the fishermen of Camurim, Brazil: "The economy is not a clearly demarcated domain of society and culture, but a different whole of practices for different social groups (1989: 19)."

Understanding local constructions of history is important to my thesis because, owing to the limits of my research, it best provides an opportunity to show the way in which the fishery is discursively understood, and how this contrasts with the understanding of the fishery as a bounded economic domain in the crisis discourse. The history of the fishery is understood by many in connection with the family and the household, and in connection to place. In addition there is an emphasis on the inshore fishery as substantively different than large-scale commercial and off-shore fishing. The symbolic importance of these aspects provide a moralistic framing of the local narrative of Lockeport's fishery. This chapter will examine the local construction of the Lockeport fishery as economy, in contrast to the history of Lockeport's fishing industry.

2.1: A history of Lockeport

I received my 'objective' history of Lockeport in records from a local gentleman by the name of James T. Bebb. Apart from his researches, there are no published official histories of Lockeport. He is recognised by all in the community as the local historian in regards to official histories and record keeping. Mr.Bebb is a navy man from Wales who eventually settled in Lockeport and taught social studies in the local high school. He has an interest in all things nautical, and his home is filled with the local history in a myriad of forms: from centuries-old harpoons and fish hooks, to photographs that tell of stories no one can recall, to the old trade log books that reveal the "glory" of Lockeport that has few traces left in its present-day form. This official history of Lockeport that was revealed through records, in particular during the era of merchant trade, has little resonance with people's historical memories.

It is known that the Mi'kmaq lived in the area on the south side of Locke's Island, and on the small Isles which dot the harbour, but aside from the evidence of a few artefacts little else is known locally about their presence and life. It seems that once the area was settled by the New Englanders and, later, the Loyalists, The Mi'kmaq were either forced to leave or dispersed on their own. The story of the founding of Lockeport or who first 'settled' the area is still something of a matter of dispute. Some say that Josiah Churchill

from Plymouth Massachusetts was the first to settle in the area in 1755, while others say that it was Dr. Jonathan Locke who came from Chilimark Massachusetts (or possibly Rhode Island) with his wife and family[5]. The settlement was first known as Ragged Island (or 'Rugged Islands'), but became known as Locke's Island and on February 16, 1870 was renamed Lockeport. By 1815 there were over 500 dwellings in the area, with most settlers being loyalists who had come as a result of the American Revolutionary war.

In his book, "Saga of the Rugged Islands" Mr. Bebb takes note of the influence that the ports of Nova Scotia had on the commercial development of the province, with Yarmouth, Shelburne, Ragged Islands, Liverpool and Lunenburg being the principal contributors outside of Halifax. According to records, the Ragged Islands had a large fishing fleet, with a considerable export and import business; by the mid-nineteenth century in many imports (such as rye flour or salt), and in the export of codfish, Ragged Island was second only to Halifax. With regard to shipping, it is of interest to note that according to 1864 records the number of voyages from Ragged Islands to the West Indies, including one to the Foreign West Indies, totalled 24, a figure exceeded only by Halifax and Liverpool. In contrast Shelburne sent 3 cargoes

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[5] There are also versions that state that John Locke first went to Liverpool from New England and later came to Ragged Islands. (CITE)

and Lunenburg one. However, as Bebb notes, the memory of these times have all but faded:

> 'Ragged Islands', for a time the country's [*sic.* century's?] greatest catcher of cod and its manufacture into salt fish for export, the largest importer of salt, and builder of numerous fast vessels (schooners and brigantines) to catch and carry these and other products, what does that name evoke? Silence, or under the name Lockeport the question 'Where's that?' [1992:150]

The question as to why this period of relative economic prosperity and success has faded from the collective memory of the people is a valid one. When I asked, most people remarked that this aspect of their past, in particular that of merchant trade, had little or no bearing on the way they live today, apart from family histories and the fact that Lockeport exists because of this past. This is interesting to note in light of Friedman's argument on the social conditions of identity formation and the production of culturally viable pasts (1992: 854). Insofar as this part of their past is no longer socially meaningful, it is not seen as a constitutive part of their history. And yet the large fishery which must have existed in Lockeport to supply the ships, of which there is scarcely a record to be found, *is* made reference to, insofar as it is connected to families that have been said to fish these waters for generations.

While Bebb describes a radical break or a discontinuity in Lockeport's history owing to the changes in the fishery from mercantile to industrialised production, this discontinuity is counterposed within the local history with

the continuities of place and of family or ancestry. In addition to these factors, the tendency to identify specifically with the inshore fishermen, eliding the role of the off-shore and more capital intensive fishery, in regards to the history of Lockeport's fishery allows for a greater sense of historical continuity between these two periods identified by Bebb in the 'official' history.

From conversations with people about Lockeport and its history, most people consider that a history of Lockeport starts with the Locke family. Perhaps this is so owing to the many descendants of the Locke's who still live in and around Lockeport, and the many monuments and historical buildings that exist in town because of the Locke's. Bebb's records indicate something of a spatialised social hierarchy in town, where only the merchants and their families, and others with official tasks, such as bankers and dentists, had residence on the island, while the fishing families resided in nearby West Head, Jordan Bay, Jordan River and Green Harbour. In spite of this, however, people's references to the town's history are unified and there is no indication of multiple or competing narratives for this 'era' in the town's history. When people speak about the early days of the fishery, there is an emphasis on the hardships of fishing at the time, and the requisite character necessary simply for a household to get by.

2.2: Understanding changes in the fishery

The history of Lockeport's fishery should not be related simply in terms of the developments and changes in the industry, because interwoven with this memory is the memory of fishing as practice, or as a way of life. When I asked about events relating to the fish plants or developments in fishing technologies, people's responses always situated these events within a context of fishing as practice. On one occasion, when I asked a fisherman about the effects that changes in fishing technologies had had on the fishery, he responded, "A fisherman's work has more to do with his love of the sea, than in wanting to get rich. You couldn't do the work if it was just to get rich. It takes a certain kind a man to get out on the ocean in his boat the whole day long, no matter what kind a gear you got." Fishing as practice embodied certain traits of character that many people considered admirable: Strength, courage, industriousness, and independence.

In examining the 'official' history of Lockeport's fishery during the industrial period it is worth noting that while newspaper coverage depicted the town as suffering greatly from the closing of its National Sea Products plant in October of 1989, the history of fish processing companies in the town has hardly been stable. This prolonged instability is perhaps a mitigating factor that contributes to how people interpret more recent problems in the industry as crisis. Through many conversations about the fishery, I had been

told of several different companies which had at one time or another run a fish-processing operation in Lockeport. These companies had gone through a convoluted process of bankruptcies, buy-outs and two incidents of complete destruction by fire.

In 1903 Swim Bros. Ltd. was established by John and Herbert Swim. The men started their business with the purchase of the wharves and waterfront fishing property of the L.P. Churchill Co. and the H. & A. Locke Company. During their first seven or eight years they handled only boneless saltfish for the West Indies Trade, as well as lobster for canning. Swim Brothers owned several 50-60 ft boats as well as some 20 ft. boats, and caught fish by hand line and long line trawl. In 1920 they started their fresh/frozen operations, but continued with the production of smoked and saltfish until approximately 1944.

The Lockeport Co. was a syndicate created in 1910, and headed by J.J. Lane of Providence, Rhode Island. The Lockeport Co. was a cold storage and fish processing plant, a fact worth noting, since the industry as a whole did not move away from salt fish toward fresh/ frozen until after the second World War, and Lockeport's industry is recognised as having been industrialised comparatively early. The Lockeport Co. was able to run a fresh/frozen operation because of the Halifax to South Shore Rail line. In 1945 the Lockeport Co. became part of the amalgamation of fish plants at Lockeport, Lunenburg and Digby that formed National Sea Products Ltd.

The third fish processing plant worth noting in Lockeport is Pierce Fisheries. It was established in 1954 and relative to Swim Bros. or Lockeport Co./ National Sea was smaller and more specialised. According to records and memory, Pierce fisheries burnt down in the 1974. In 1978 Swim Brothers went bankrupt, and was bought up by Pierce. Pierce fisheries ran the plant for seven or eight years eventually selling out to Clearwater Industries. In 1981 the National Sea Plant also burned down. National Sea rebuilt and reopened the plant by November of 1982, but then threatened to close the plant because of financial difficulties. Government bailed-out the company to protect it from bankruptcy but in 1989 National Sea announced that it would be closing down all of its Lockeport operations, with 220 workers losing their jobs. In 1997 Clearwater industries expanded its production to processing of crab and scallops and transferred its operation to the old National Sea Plant. At present there are 270 hired workers employed by Clearwater, although much of the work is seasonal and as one individual related to me, "you never know how many hours you might be working next week."

The media focused their attention on the closing of Lockeport's National Sea plant as an indication of wider problems the company, and the industry, was facing. It seems however, that their suggestion that the closing of the plant was necessarily an overwhelming disaster for the town is not immediately apparent if one views it in relation to the town's experience with

the industry. Nearly all of the people with whom I spoke about the closing of the plant said that it was in many ways devastating for the community, but it was always related to the long series of shifts, problems and other devastation – such as the fires - with which it was associated in their minds. While the population of the town now stands at 800, I was told that during the 1960s the town's population was over 1200, and that back then Lockeport had a movie theatre, two clothing shops, two restaurants, and another grocery store. And yet while there were a few who spoke of the town being in decline, most people thought that, while it wasn't as successful as it had been a generation ago, on the whole it was doing well for itself.

Another curious aspect which illuminates people's relationship to and understanding of the industry in Lockeport is the way in which the 'Lockeport Lockout' was related to me. The Lockeport Lockout is touted as the first significant attempt to amalgamate the interests of the fisherman and fishplant workers in Canada[6]. What had developed in regards to the industry in the area was the increasing centralisation among a few buyers who cooperated on the purchase of fish through price-fixing and territory division. A Royal Commission on price spreads in 1934 stated that the result for the fisherman was "an almost total loss of bargaining power," without

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[6] As one of the organisers Charles Murray stated, "It was in Lockeport where the policy was thrashed out as to the difference between deep-sea fishermen, inshore fishermen and fishhandlers and the union. They decided there was room for all of them (as quoted in Calhoun, 1983:4)."

which he was "reduced to the position of having to accept from the dealers for his fish whatever price they care to offer (as quoted in Calhoun, 1983)." The fish plant workers were equally beholden to the meagre wages and dismal working conditions that the two plants gave them. Thus, under the leadership of two 'outsiders', Pat Sullivan and Charles Murray, men who had made unsuccessful attempts elsewhere to organise effective unions in the East Coast fisheries and had been labelled by owners in the industry as communist organisers, the fishermen of Lockeport created Local #1 of the Canadian Fishermen's Union on August 15, 1939. The fishplant workers followed suit and created Local #2, and with that the two attempted collective bargaining with the companies in mid-October. On October 21st both companies shut down their operations, and locked out the workers.

What followed was a remarkable eight week strike which had such staunch local support that 200 Mounties had to be called in to make attempts to forcefully break up the picketers who had been blocking the railway line. On December 15 the plants reopened and, in spite of the unions having received such dedicated support, most people went back to work. The leaders and organisers quickly dispersed to other areas with hopes to organise elsewhere. Some of the locals, who had been tagged by the companies as militants, were never rehired, and lacking jobs, most went off to war.

The Lockout was a spectacle whose influence in the minds and hearts

of the people of Lockeport faded as quickly as it was drummed up. Calhoun questions why people so willingly went back to work after their long struggle to secure better wages and better working conditions; she continuously makes mention of the staunch support that the Lockeport women gave to their fisherman or fish handler husbands, fathers and brothers. One answer lies in the lack of a developed class identity, which would have allowed for the problems of the lockout to be seen as enduring beyond the immediate demands made of the two plants. Had the fishplant workers identified themselves first and foremost as members of a clear and distinct working class, whose interests were inherently in conflict with the interests of the managers, they may have held out against the plant managers: The fact that conditions in the plants changed only marginally after the lockout, and that after Murray and Sullivan were expelled from the community the labour movement pretty much faded into nothing, demonstrates that people's motivations for participating in the Lockout were not based in class identity. Nevertheless, it does indicate something with respect to how many people in Lockeport were stirred, however temporarily, to see themselves in terms of relations of production.

Generally speaking, the Lockeport Lockout has faded from the town's historical memory, and though Calhoun describes it as a key event in the development of the province's labour movement, it is seen as having little significance to people's lives today, even in the eyes of one of its key local

supporters and organisers, Norman Anderson. When I asked people in town about the event, my questions were generally met with indifference, or alternatively, a story about how difficult and miserable life was in those days. While I have little to offer in terms of interpreting the Lockout in relation to the rest of Lockeport's history, it seems that the distance afforded by time has allowed people to incorporate the events of the Lockout as another (though perhaps more spectacular) example of the difficulties of the life in "the fishing".

An additional aspect of the retelling of Lockeport's history in regards to the fishery deals with the involvement and influence of the government on fishing in terms of organisation and in terms of practice. Researchers in the Atlantic Canada fishery have argued that government attempts to rationalise the industry in the Atlantic may be largely responsible for the depletion of the groundfish stocks, a perspective largely shared by local fishermen (Apostle, Barrett, et al., 1998: 155). The fishermen with whom I spoke made reference to the almost mythic ignorance of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans regarding basic ecological knowledge about fish behaviours and habitats, in their favouring the use of more destructive harvesting techniques for the sake of economic competitiveness. For about as long as people could recall, the 'heavyweights' (the commercial draggers) have been favoured over the 'little guy' (the inshore independent fisherman). As one retired fisherman

said, regarding the government's responsibility in the decimation of the groundfish stocks by subsidising the use of draggers:

> The thing is you see the fish ain't never gonna come back. As long as the present conditions exist, 'cause they're killin' all the little monkeys, tearin' the bottom - all the spawning ground - all to pieces and the fish aren't gonna come back under them conditions. If maybe they'd subsidise a change over to long-lining after awhile they'd come back. If we wouldn't be catching the little fish. Imagine, a hundred thousand of fish that long. ..a hundred thousand pounds...if they'd get to be that long how many thousand pounds, eight or ten...they've destroyed 'em there's none. They're all destroyed. And the government's responsible. Nobody else is responsible but the government. [From interview with Norman Anderson, May 28, 2003]

The quota and licensing systems are seen as especially reflective of government incompetence and of favouritism towards the bigger boats. With the downturn in the groundfish stock, the DFO made further restrictions on the licensing system, which generally has had the result of edging out the small-scale inshore fishermen. Keeping the fishing tradition in the family has become, for some, too costly, as the State increasingly shapes the relationship of the fishermen to his resource into that of petty capitalists:

> One man said they made it too expensive. He said I gave my license to my son, I never received a cent for it and I have to pay. Because they said if you had sold it to someone else you would have received so much, so you have to pay income. [Interview with Amos Hagar, May 12, 2003]

Holding a license in the Lockeport area is generally less costly than its neighbouring districts, and many fishermen today hold licenses for several different species. What bothers the fishermen though, is the way the quota

system is implemented. When quotas were allotted to different fishermen they were based on the average catches from the three previous years, a fact of which the fishermen were apparently not aware. Because lobstering was especially profitable during those years, many men did little or no other fishing for less profitable types of species, and hence the quotas they subsequently were allotted were very low. For most, the quota is so small that their harvesting expenses are greater than the market price for their catch. Their only solution is to try to buy up the quotas of other men to make their effort worthwhile, or alternatively to sell their quota to another fisherman. The year that I was in Lockeport, there were two men in the Lockeport harbour fishing (for halibut, haddock, herring, but primarily the more lucrative swordfish) in the lobstering off-season, and five from the nearby harbours, representing 10% of the inshore fleet.

Discussions about the history or changes in the fishing industry in Lockeport are for most people often situated against a history of fishing as practice or as a way of life. The work is tied to an ethos:

> That is the art of being independent: you fish where you think you are going to get the best catches, and lots of times after you fish in a place for a number of years, you get to know the bottom better. And so you tend to stay there, and it's uh, when they first started lobster fishing with row dories to travel fifty miles and drop your traps and haul your traps and row back in ... So you tended to stay as close to the community as you could because it was less time, less efforts. But then with the motor boats they tended to go where they could get the best catches of fish. But they still stayed as close to the community as they could. [Interview with Amos Hagar, June 12, 2003]

Narratives about changes in industry or government management are not simply a retelling of facts, but are always related in terms of lived experience and the way such changes affect one's ethos.

That most people's in Lockeport's understanding of the history of the fishery is tied primarily to the inshore fishery, which constitutes a relatively small percentage of the men and women involved in the fishing industry as a whole in the community, demonstrates Friedman's argument about the relationship between the social conditions of identity formation and the production of culturally viable pasts. The inshore fishery has been the most stable and enduring fishery within the community. Although income and success in the inshore fishery is still precarious, it has not suffered the more turbulent ups and downs of the corporate/ off-shore sector. Historicizing the community through the inshore fishery reproduces a sense of historical continuity between past and present, and a more viable future.

In addition to this, it is possible that the inshore fishery is central to people's understanding of the history of the fishery in Lockeport because, as a form of production, it has strong ties to the household and family. Production in the inshore fishery has a tendency to reproduce particular kinds of household and family relationships. In the past especially, fishing crews consisted of kinsmen, generally father/son, or brothers, and the running of households and rearing of children was also maintained through kin ties:

Having strong kin ties was crucial to the success of one's household and one's fishing enterprise. Thus the mode of production and social reproduction are intricately linked. In this sense, changes in the former may indeed translate into other forms of 'crisis', as Habermas points to in his discussion of 'system integration' and 'social integration'.

Interestingly, though, the introduction of new technologies and methods in the fishery allowed for the importance of kin ties outside the household to be weakened. Many wives no longer needed the support of their wider kin networks in maintaining the household (in a practical sense, though not at all symbolically). This perhaps accounts for the development of more rigid and gendered roles within households. I was told by some that the roles of wives became more indulgently 'domestic' as family incomes became relatively stable for a period in the 1950s to late 1960s, whereas prior to this a woman's capacity for hard work was crucial to the household's being able to stay afloat. This period of relative wealth in the community has allowed for the development of a more rigid sense of gender roles –probably adopted from those existing in the upper classes - that generally persist today, in speech if not in practice. Many woman I spoke with stated that their first priority was "to run a good house". They point out that while other women's husbands have 9 to 5 jobs, and can thus expect them to help out around the house, their husbands work around the clock, either out fishing

from early morning to late afternoon, or getting the boat ready for the next days trip. This means that the woman is responsible to do all the household cleaning and tidying, as well as to have meals ready and the laundry done. "Running a good house", however, does not entail making major household decisions, which many left to their husbands, including taking care of finances. This is in many ways similar to the Dona de Casa role of the women in Cole's Women of the Praia (1990).

While relations between men and women within the household became more rigid, and the necessity of kin ties to maintain the household fell away, the centrality of kin ties within the community was in part maintained through the continued use of kin as crew on the fishing boats. The danger of kin-based crews was brought home to Lockeport when in the 1957 Gale, a family lost almost all of its men. In spite of this many men said they still preferred to work with kin on their boats. The most common reason for this was concern for the welfare of kin, which indicates that sharing wealth within kin networks is part of the fishing ethos.

For many people the inshore fishery is most prominent in the history of Lockeport's fishery not only because it is embedded in and reproduces family and household ties, but also because it is seen as a symbolic representation of certain values. The independence of the inshore fisherman has its parallel with respect to the household, a value which manifests itself in a distinct sense of private and public domains. Strength and courage are also highly

and publicly valued, and the dangers of fishing attest to this. For most, fishing is a way of getting by, of maintaining social and economic patterns over time, rather than a means to advancement and riches. The fact that so many men chose not to go fishing for Halibut, and other groundfish during the off-season when the lobstering season has been good, demonstrates this. Under the quota regime however, their strategy had the result of reducing their economic flexibility.

2.3: The people of Lockeport: are they experiencing Crisis?

As Bourdieu and Habermas both state, understandings of crisis need to be interpreted from within because they are predicated on the experience of structural alterations, and not simply the alterations themselves. As such it is important to understand the way the fishery as economy is locally understood in discourse and in practice, because these understandings will structure the process of interpreting the downturn in the fishery. Media coverage at the time of the closing of the National Sea plant in Lockeport was relatively high: it was presented as indicative of the spread of the fisheries crisis across the Atlantic. One article went so far as to say that "Lockeport is dying", asserting that family break-ups were the cause.[7] While it is safe to say that Lockeport has not died and is a relatively stable

[7] This quote was in the Oct. 22, 1990 edition of the Halifax Daily News.

community, it is worth noting that a Labour Adjustment study conducted by the DFO in 1991 in relation to the 'sudden' changes in Lockeport's fishery showed that many people surveyed were unhappy with their situations (DFO, 1991). According to Canadian census data, the population of the town went from 798 in 1991, to 692 in 1996 (interestingly, with less than 7% of the adult population divorced or separated), a fact which suggests that those people who left were feeling the stresses of the groundfish fishery collapse[8]. These findings present a picture of Lockeport during the early period of the plant closure that indicates a situation of greater severity than people described to me while I was doing my research a decade later. While it is interesting to consider the differences that I might have encountered in peoples perspectives had I done my research then, it does not make their current understandings and presentations any less genuine. Indeed, it makes their claims of not experiencing nor having previously experienced crisis all the more interesting.

What was the impact of the National Sea closure, which laid off 220 workers, on people's understandings of the fishery? As described earlier, people spoke of the closure in relation to a series of changes and exchanges in the local processing industry since the 1970s. Many in the community also stated that they had anticipated that National Sea would close the plant after the government subsidization has ceased. Obviously, all of these comments

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[8] The 2001 census gives a population of 701.

were made with the benefit of hindsight, with the knowledge that in 1996 Clearwater fisheries would expand its production and 'take over' the old National Sea plant, a fact which in their eyes upheld the general narrative of the industry changes and exchanges that had been occurring for more than a generation. The 1996 census reported a 13 % unemployment rate, relatively low for a town that in 1989, with a population of approximately 800, lost 220 jobs.

One possible way of interpreting these kinds of findings is that Lockeport, much like the Scottish communities that Nadel-Klein wrote of, has been experiencing crisis for so long now that it has virtually become normative. On the other hand, Habermas' criticism about the inability to recognise what is essential to the system (to the fishery) from without, results in the interpretation of any kind of structural change as crisis. It seems, then, that the events of the fishplant industry in town (and the effects that these events have on the population of the community) are not understood or experienced as being central to the way people conceive of the fishery. It seems, rather, that the inshore fishery, which has been relatively untouched by the 'fisheries crisis', and the practices and understandings embedded in the inshore fishery are seen by most people as constitutive of the fishery, and therefore the reproduction of these practices are necessary to the reproduction of the fishery as it is understood by people.

Much of the local discourse about the practice of fishing speaks to its significance: while the practice of fishing reproduces relations between members in the community, particularly relations within households and roles in the household and other kin relations, it also says something about one's status as an individual, i.e. what kind of man you are in the eyes of others and in self-image. Local models and logics for gender roles and relations are tied to forms of production in the fishery, as is the prominence of kin ties within and between households. Traits of fortitude and endurance, resourcefulness, loyalty, and most especially independence were all considered to be admirable in Lockeport. Fishing is not simply one means among many for providing one's livelihood, but is a definitive economic and symbolic practice, thoroughly embedded in the way one approaches and understands the world and how one is situated within the community.

2.4: Discussion

The assumptions made in the crisis discourse in its shift from an economic crisis to a social crisis are based on a simplistic economic model of coastal community fisheries. The local economies of these communities are understood as being rigid and homogenous, as dependant on the success of processing plants for their survival, and thus any failing in the fishplant industry would likewise be a failing in the community as a social whole. This assumption, in combination with the regionalist perceptions, has allowed for

the crisis discourse to be applied across the Atlantic, particularly in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Interestingly one example that was used in the media to portray that the crisis was not simply an issue for Newfoundland was the closing of the National Sea plant in Lockeport in 1990. According to media portrayal the closing of this plant was catastrophic for Lockeport, a company town, whose families and households were reliant on the plant for their livelihood. The irony in this portrayal is that in the late 1930s Lockeport indeed was a company town, whose residents were economically 'dependant' on the local fish plants, as the 1939 Lockout makes evident. Since then, however, and almost contrary to government efforts to centralise and stabilise the industry, local markets have diversified, a process which has freed local fishermen from the virtual market monopolies that the fish plants had created. Local fishermen today list seven potential buyers to whom they can sell their catch, whether it be lobster, halibut, swordfish, etc. Many of whom operate on a small scale system as middlemen to regional processors, or who process small amounts themselves.

The inshore fishery is tied to a wider network of practices that relate to normative understandings of household and gender relations. The reproduction of practices in the inshore fishery also reproduces these normative understandings. In addition, the inshore fishery is also more flexible than the off-shore, although this flexibility has been undermined somewhat by the restructuring of the fishery through policy and regulation

changes. It is likely that this flexibility of the inshore fishery is linked to its direct ties to household reproduction. The inshore fishery also has strong ties to the ethos of community life in Lockeport: the fishing practices are in some sense symbolic of the community as a whole. Thus while other events in the community are seen as catastrophic or crisis-like events, and while they do seem to involve and engage the people of the community on various levels, they have not affected the towns ability to reproduce the practices that appear to be central to their understanding of the fishery.

Chapter Three: Women's FishNet – Theory put to Practice

In this chapter I examine one way in which the crisis discourse has interacted with local conceptions of the fishery and how the fishery relates to community life. The development of a branch of Women's Fishnet in Lockeport is a direct result of the fishery crisis discourse. The way in which many women in the community have chosen to deal with Fishnet could be said to represent their perception of the relevance of this discourse to their own lives and the lives of people in the community generally.

The example of how Women's Fishnet in Lockeport was conceived and what it eventually became, is indicative of the disjuncture between external discourses and internal logics and practices of crisis. Nova Scotia Women's Fishnet was founded in 1994 as an organisation to help women deal with women's issues relating to the fisheries crisis in coastal communities (CRIAW report, 2001: i). It was felt that women were bearing the brunt of the burden that the crisis was putting on families and households. The research developed and carried out by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) in partnership with Nova Scotia Women's Fishnet resulted in the identification of a need for the women of two communities, Lockeport and nearby Wood's Harbour, to have their own specialised community branches. Yet, there has been a distinct lack of participation in the organisation from the women of Lockeport. In this

chapter I examine why this is the case, in particular, how CRIAW's understanding of crisis and their attempt to create a public discourse for women's issues, was confronted by a community that did not share their sense of crisis, nor feel the need or desire to develop this discourse. This confrontation occurred at the level of practice but reflects more profound differences and distinctions in terms of cultural logics.

3.1 : The Development and Logic of Lockeport's Fishnet

The Lockeport branch of Fishnet developed out of the findings of the CRIAW project conducted in 1999. The project report stated that women were being adversely affected by the fisheries crisis, and that they had no formal or institutional means by which to deal with their problems. The political and economic restructuring of the fishery and fishing communities was putting stresses on women, that were listed as being, "increasing alienation and isolat[ion] in their communities(Ibid: i)", and "experiencing increasing negativity and more family stress which sometimes shows up in problems such as gambling addiction, substance abuse, or domestic violence (2001: ii)". The methodology the project followed consisted of a series of 20 semi-structured personal interviews and 6 focus groups with women from the communities (of which there were 4) conducted by the community researchers. In addition to this they also had the community researchers keep a journal on their reflections about the research and about the changes

in the community. While this methodology is certainly commendable in its attempt to be thorough, the research framework started with the assumption of crisis and attributed all that was said to it.

Instead of providing culturally sensitive and practical suggestions to deal with these problems, the suggestions made were structural and seem ideological. They include more responsive governments and inclusion of women in decision-making, public awareness and education about issues affecting women, fairer and more equitable policies and programs, and accessible services and programs available locally, to name a few. Little was said as to how these suggestions could be realised practically. For such suggestions to be effective in creating change in the community for the women, people would have to be firstly, aware of and integrated into the discourse of which it is a part, and secondly, open to making such structural changes in the community. The report was effective in making changes in programs, policies and services, but it did not address the implementation of these changes in a manner appropriate to the community. In short it had not considered the issue of pre-existing social and cultural contexts, and how these new programs and policies would fit into these contexts. This is in part because of a lack of reflexivity regarding the research process.

The methodology the project followed was ostensibly of an 'action research' model, i.e. intended to create positive changes for the community, though the impetus for the research developed from within CRIAW rather

than from within the community. The methods used consisted of a series of semi-structured personal interviews and focus groups with women from the community conducted by the community researchers. The report states that many of the community researchers and women involved in the focus groups "spoke of learning about new aspects of what women are going through as a result of the interviews (Ibid: 3)," though this lack of awareness within the communities did not deter the project from implementing programs that are in many ways dependent on this awareness.

In my interview with one of the women who was a community researcher in Lockeport for the project, I was told of how much she was affected by hearing the stories of individual women's struggles in the community: she had lived much of her adult life in the community and had been unaware of these issues. One question that might have been included in the research process is why these issues and problems have been hidden, and what significance can be attributed to this? It is here where a more reflexive approach differs from such pragmatic research projects: in order to introduce changes effectively it is necessary to consider the context in which the changes will occur.

The CRIAW study is founded on several assumptions that influenced its findings and the eventual outcome. The first assumption made by the research group was that the changes in the fishery that had been occurring were in some way qualitatively different from changes in the fishery in the

past, and hence the issues that emerged were of a different order. The second assumption was that since the women had spoken of their feelings and concerns, they would be open to structural and ideological changes if given the opportunity. This second assumption speaks especially strongly to the influence that the crisis concept has on the way one perceives differing situations: it is because we think about the fishery and the community as being in crisis, and thereby having inherent contradictions that require resolution, that we interpret what people from the community say in a particular way. It also speaks to a specific understanding of the relationship between discourse, in particular a discourse of suffering, and practice that may not be the reality for the women of the communities. How do the women make sense of the research project and related interviews in regards to their own lives and to life in the community generally?

3. 2: Fishnet – A View From Within

In an interview with one of the founders of the Lockeport branch of Fishnet I was given insight into a host of issues that all influenced the way Fishnet played out in Lockeport: the views and personalities of the founding women, the process of the research project as seen from the community researchers, the intentions of CRIAW as to what Fishnet would be, and the reasons why it was not successful in regards to these intentions (which is not to say that it has not been successful in other ways), and perhaps most

importantly a local perspective on the behaviours and attitudes of most women from the community, which in the end serves as explanation for the outcome of Fishnet. All of this was related to me in a wide-ranging narrative presented in terms of everyday experience; I will present this narrative below in entirety to preserve the inter-connectedness of the various elements discussed.

On Fishnet, Privacy, and Lashed Logs

This conversation took place in the lovely cottage of my interviewee, in a community just outside Lockeport, called Little Harbour. Phyllis and I had been conversing about her experiences as a woman of the community when I queried as to how Fishnet related to these experiences:

> Fishnet I think it has gone astray, it never really worked as we wanted it to...
>
> Basically what they [the community researchers] found was, they [local women] couldn't talk to their neighbours, because we all lived with a facade, "Oh everything's great in my house, I don't know what it's like in your house but we're getting along fine. Even though your old man's out in the barn drunk, you know, and you've lost your job and you don't have an income. Uh, they didn't have a place where they could go and sit down and talk. If you talk to your neighbour, nine times out of ten they would talk about you behind your back. People here are very, you know, they're proud of their background, they're proud of their lineage, they're proud of their hard work, they're proud of their homes, and they have, most of these women that we interviewed, they were proud of the fact that they were hard workers. They worked in the fish plant, or they worked in the hospital, or they worked in a store or a waitress or something.

They were contributing. And uh, they didn't want their neighbour to know what they were going through... And they really would like some place that they could go and talk to some one who wasn't their next door neighbour, or sister or sister in law. Because that was just like an erosion of their pride.

So when we sent all these reports back to uh, St. Mary's we had a couple of round table discussions, we decided we would like to have two or three centres in Shelburne county set up for these women to go to. Drop in and have a cup of tea or coffee and talk. If they wanted to upgrade their education, we could smooth their way.. If they want to learn computer, I'll teach you. Or if they just wanted to have a day away from the house and the husband and the kids. ...

It started out that way. We had a wonderful woman, Lillian Benham. You heard of Lillian, yeah she was a wonder. And she just took the bull by the horns and after we had sent in our report I was involved in other things and I kind of dropped it, and one day I got this phone call and this voice said "Mrs. Wolfe, this is Lillian Benham." And I said if I'd have been in my right mind I'd have hung up ...and she said "I have lots of people who want to talk to you." Well that's when the hard work started because when Lillian said "Would you please just do this for me," that was that... She went after this organisation and that organisation. She was great fireball...

We were there, we advertised, we had open houses and it is still... to me I think it still a matter of pride. "I don't want to admit to me how hard things are", "I would like to do this and this but I don't want you to know," "I don't want my neighbour to know." And in a way it's like my grandmother used to say, 'you're programmed to muddle through on your own.' ...

Our concept, was basically an open door. You come in and you can sit down and talk, or you can come for information, or you can come to learn the computer, or if you want to talk...

I just think that they are so ... contained. That it's hard for them to really let their guard down. ... but there's this hesitancy and I don't know whether to pin it down to pride or lack of education. Um, I think schools in a way have fallen down on the job because they used to have counsellor there but now they don't....

You know they [the men] don't think they're chauvinistic. But it's like, my husband's generation, he's 72, they grew up with the idea that a woman was a man's handmaid that's uh, you know, to serve him, to wait on him and you actually did not express your opinion. You had your thoughts, you were *there* , but...

I don't think any man has the right to treat you as a servant... and I think the best thing that ever happened is he [husband] went out West where he met a different kind of people, where they were a different society structure, they were more educated, more urban. Uh, the women were greater thinkers than around here, and he started travelling and I think when he come home he saw exactly what I saw, that women aren't servants, that we have our own minds, we're human too...

If you're gonna let your man to treat you like that, then you deserve it. There's no need for women to stand behind the door, there absolutely isn't...

Of all the times that I thought "This is the end of it, I can't take another day of him being a fisherman, if he's late another day I'm gonna start tearing down the house." Uh, the worst experience I've ever had, well no not quite the worst but one of the worst, was the phone rang one day and it was my mother, and she was all upset and she said "Phyllis, Victor's body is floating in the dock." "What?!" "Yeah, Victor fell over board, and his body is floating in the dock. You've gotta go down and fish him out." And I just said, "Don't tell me that." And she said, "He is, I know he is." And I could hear my brother-in-law's voice in the back ground, "I'll go down." And I hung up, and the feeling... it's very hard to explain it's like I knew this was gonna happen I thought I'd be prepared for it, but I wasn't. The bottom just drops out ... and you're thinking I've got four children, no insurance, really no know-how to get in the fishing business, no high school education, I'm living down *here*. What on earth am I gonna do? And just about the time you convince yourself you can never cope, your brother-in-law's wife calls and says "It was two logs lashed together, it got away from somebody and floated down the dock." And you feel like gettin up and going over and throttling your mother-in-law. Then your husband comes home, you know, three or four hours later, and your still in that room you know shaking inside and out, and he looks at you and says "What the hell's wrong with you?" ....

And that was just me... I know some fishermen who were lost and I just think in my mind what was going through their

> [wives'] minds and what they were going through, and if I'd go to their house, while they were going through this, you'd never see it, because she was totally in control. Mentally she knew this could happen and physically she was coping...
>
> They're incredible, fishermen are incredible, what they're lifestyle is like, they're strong emotionally and spiritually, fishermen. And I think a woman has got to be strong physically and mentally. A fisherman's wife. I mean you do everything, the books you keep the house you keep, help with the business, do without when there is no money...

The way in which the issues all coalesce to form a coherent narrative is perhaps awkward for someone from 'outside', but this is all the more interesting because of the naturalness of the discourse and the associations made within it. To disentangle such a narrative, where associations are made so freely and naturally would be a failing on my part, insofar as I am attempting to convey a fuller understanding of internal logics.

As Phyllis later told me, the role of Fishnet was not that of activism and advocacy, it was to provide women a sense of release and some support for the day to day problems they faced. Phyllis' narrative reflects the complex position she occupies as a 'liaison' between the community and the researchers: there is a tension in that she doesn't know whether to attribute the local women's extreme privacy to pride, or lack of education. She speaks of her husband's education about women, and women's rights and roles, through his leaving the community; on the other hand she speaks of the

incredible, and sometimes necessary, strength that the women have in dealing with extreme situations, and thus associates this privacy with a strong sense of independence. The strict gender roles in the community, which she describes as making the wife the 'handmaid' or 'servant' of the husband, in combination with the strong kin ties and "pride in one's lineage" has resulted in a silence on the part of the women in regards to their own problems and issues. Phyllis recognises that to attribute women's silence to a gendered form of oppression is too simplistic: there is an underlying historically and culturally embedded logic from which gender cannot be abstracted.

There are contradictions in Phyllis' narrative that belie the ambiguity of her position: she helped to create Lockeport's Fishnet to help women, speaking of their unawareness through lack of experience, yet she feels that the change has to come from within, that women have to take responsibility for themselves and their relations with their husbands. Phyllis sees the strength of the women, and the system in which it is embedded, specifically life in a fishing household, and seeks to find a way to help the women to speak of their problems without losing face. Yet assurances of confidentiality have not been enough to affect women's involvement and participation. The entire committee of Fishnet as it stands today is composed of women who have come to Lockeport from elsewhere, or women from Lockeport who have lived elsewhere for an extended period and returned. Like Phyllis' husband,

awareness of the difficulties women face comes from the view that distance provides.

3.3: Understanding Community Involvement in Fishnet

What, then, might explain the lack of community participation in Fishnet? In asking local women what they thought of Fishnet, most responses expressed confusion as to the aims and actions of the group: "What is that place anyways?", or "What are they about, anyhow?". This kind of response is in itself a partial explanation as to why Fishnet lacks community involvement. However, it was often followed by commentary on its rather indiscrete location: the Fishnet office is right in the centre of town, where - as many women pointed out to me – one could easily be seen entering and leaving the building. To be seen going to the Fishnet office was understood as compromising insofar as people would talk about one's reasons for doing so. Despite their confessed lack of knowledge about Fishnet, then, there was relative consensus regarding reasons for involvement with the group. One would only solicit the help of Fishnet if there was a significant problem in one's private life. Generally, the way to deal with such problems is to deal with them privately. For private problems to be brought out into the public realm is embarrassing and shameful, regardless of cause or responsibility. Most people in Lockeport guard their privacy (and hence their personal problems) quite closely, though there is always a vulnerability to gossip. As

Phyllis expressed to me in one of our conversations, "The women here hold each other down worse than their men do."

In spite of its intentions to circumvent the gossip chain, Fishnet has been incorporated within it in a way that disables its potential to achieve its goals: any association with Fishnet is seen as a sign of the kind of personal turmoil that is often the centre of local gossip. It is the strength of this communicative system and the logic that underlies it that was misunderstood by the CRIAW/Fishnet researchers. While social isolation was listed among the sources of stress for women in the report, it downplayed the issue of gossip, saying only that women were reluctant to talk to their friends in the community because they "w anted to protect their privacy (2001:22)." The report focused the issue of isolation on men's domination over women, citing one of their interviewees:

> It's pretty hard to get people to come into people's houses and talk to you about problems and stuff because of the domineering males. They just wouldn't allow people to come in. And then the women find it difficult to get out because they won't allow them to go out to these meetings or to participate in things. They want them under their thumbs. (Ibid: 22)."

While the issue of 'being under the thumbs' of men was brought up in conversations many times during my research, the reasons women gave as to why they were not involved with Fishnet was either a lack of interest in the organisation, or concern over gossip. That there may be linkages here to

something we might call patriarchy, the fact remains that the women did not theorise it so.

The central location for the office was chosen in part strategically, as an attempt to incorporate Fishnet and its objectives into the heart of community life[9]. Fishnet did not intend to subvert the privacy which so many people in the community value, but was attempting to create a public discursive space for "women's issues". While the conversations that were to be held were meant to be private (and confidential) ones, the act of conversing about these issues was to occur in a public space. It is this change, from the Fishnet being run out of women's homes to being run out of a centrally located and deliberately public space, that Phyllis referred to in her claim that Fishnet had gone "astray". Phyllis was concerned with giving women the support she felt they needed in dealing with problems in their private lives in an equally private way. Originally, Lockeport's Fishnet was not intended to challenge the boundaries of the public and private realms. Phyllis felt that women (and others in their separate households) ought to come to their own conclusions about the roles that women play in households and communities, that Fishnet should foster, but not force, this process, and in

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[9] That the choice of office space was strategic was related to me by the then-current office manager. On the other hand, it should be noted that there is very little office space to choose from in town, and thus one suspects that chance had some part to play in where the Fishnet office ended up.

this sense she sees a distinction between 'activism' and 'support'. [10] Interestingly, the majority of other women from Fishnet also feel this way, which perhaps explains the organisation's lack of activism in the community. Regardless of the personal perceptions of its composing members, the structure of the organisation, as it has been created by the CRIAW is fundamentally interventionist and activist. It challenges the status quo by stating that women's needs are not being met by current social and institutional frameworks. Interestingly, then, while we can speak of disjuncture between the organisation and the women of the community who do not participate in Fishnet, we can also speak of a disjuncture between the organisation and its composing members at the community level.

The activism inherent in the Fishnet concept came into conflict with the community on the most practical level, with the local structures of gossip and the logics embedded in it. Gossip as a form of communication stands in direct contrast with the kind of public forum of discourse that Fishnet, and in particular the feminist researchers of the 1999 project, were attempting to create. Gossip is structured on and around privacy. As a practice it ambiguously both undermines it (through invading and undercutting the

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[10] The distinction between 'activism' and 'support' that Phyllis makes is not always apparent to everyone. There are some in the community who feel that providing public support (however discrete) for private problems is in itself a form of advocacy.

privacy of others by talking about them in their absence, and hence without their control), and reproduces it (insofar as the practice itself presupposes the bounded realm of the private, both in regards to the person gossiped about and the act of gossiping itself, which is also private). Gossiping is an inherently private act, which nonetheless allows for the flow of information between households (or within communities). Most times, the repercussions of this flow of information are as discrete as the flow itself (sometimes more or less so). The results of gossip vary, from losing face, to ostracism (temporary or permanent), to differing forms of 'local justice' (i.e. arson, theft, trickery). What should be recognised is that there is never an *explicit* invasion of one's privacy, insofar as gossiping itself is seen as socially and morally reprehensible, and public revelations of the information are never made, as people only understand the reason for the act insofar as they are themselves a part of the gossip chain.

While the anthropological literature has largely focused on the content of gossip, for instance gossip as a "technique for maintaining community control through the elucidation of a public morality (Abrahams, 1970: 290), Gluckman's 'unity of morals' (1963), or Paine's 'furthering of one's own interests' (1967), there has been little examination as to the stylistic components of gossip (see Brenneis, 1984). It seems that in Lockeport the content of gossip falls much more in line with Gluckman's proposition of gossip as a unifying mechanism, it is equally if not more important to

understand the choice of gossip as a style or form of communication. While some such as Abrahams (1970) focus on how gossip as performance solidifies and reproduces relationships between the gossipers, I believe that gossip as performance in Lockeport reproduces the private and the public worlds in relation to each other. In the act of gossiping information is always tied to people and relationships between people: information is never presented as divorced from opinion or perspective. As such, it is rarely presented in an absolute form (as testimony), and the person who is on the receiving end manages the information they hear in relation to the context of its being told (as hearsay). In relation to this, the responsibility of the person who relays information is much less strict than in public discourse, as is evident by the tendency toward hyperbolic and dramatic speech. During my stay in Lockeport I heard many stories about people's personal lives, but I learned quickly that one should never take these stories as being fact, unless it "came from the horse's mouth". Indeed it appears that this method of relaying information is so ingrained in people that they approach public forms of discourse with a significant degree of scepticism, and prefer to make up their own minds about things.

3.4: Discussion

In not situating its objectives within the local production and significance of gossip, we can thereby understand the practical reason why

Fishnet was not able to meet its objectives. What can be said, though, is that in framing local experience as crisis the CRIAW researchers supposed a latent necessity to change that would be realised through Fishnet, and hence that a critical discourse would develop. One possibility for this misunderstanding relates to the differences in how people interact and exchange information when gossiping and how issues are approached within a more open and public discursive space. Criticisms are latent in gossip conversations, but they can always be withdrawn. The impetus toward action in the gossip scenario is much less direct than in public discourse, where only those skilled in the art of rhetoric don't have to own what they say.

That there were women in the community who spoke openly about their situation and their experiences in the interviews and focus groups of the research project prompts some interesting questions about the reproduction of relations of power within the community. I speculate that the interview and focus group forum presented enough distance from the mechanisms and relations of power in the community that women felt more free to express their own sentiments and beliefs. The openness during the focus groups also suggests that group discussion is more conducive to bringing light to difficulties women face than an individual help-seeking paradigm. That they did not act on these sentiments when provided the opportunity suggeststhey are incorporated into a community maintained hegemonic system. The

gendered practice embedded in the fishery whereby women's domain is within the household, as they frame their actions as members of the household in the community (for instance, as volunteers in community groups), and the way that women even serve to reproduce this gendered practice (through gossip), means that they would rather interpret their position as being one of honour and valour than of submission and oppression. Gerald Sider presents a similar case in his discussion about the reproduction of the household in Newfoundland's history, whereby the patterns of reproduction of the household often meant the reproduction of violence within or against the household (Sider, 1988). In Lockeport, that there is no crisis in the fishery means that there is no threat to the reproduction of this hegemony.

Chapter Four: Women and Fishing – Transformation and Continuity

This chapter examines how the wider crisis discourse has interpolated with local practices, looking specifically at the recent development of women's direct involvement in fishing. The example of women fishing with their husbands demonstrates how structural changes in the fishery in the form of quota systems and Employment Insurance policies and regulations, owing to the "fisheries crisis", have led to the development of previously unconsidered or anomalous practices. The example also provides an opportunity to examine the way in which new practices may develop in relation to pre-existing discursive frameworks and logics, and in a sense corresponds well with the theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu, Sahlins and Robben.

While the example of Women's Fishnet demonstrates that the crisis discourse is divergent from the cultural logic of the people of the community, it has nonetheless been interposed with the local structures in a way that has resulted in changes for the community. Communities such as Lockeport must deal with the wider discourses and perceptions on the state of the fishery, because these discourses have real effects within the community, in particular the increasing regulation and management of the fishery over the past decade. This means that people must engage to some extent with the

'crisis discourse', but how this is negotiated, and how this negotiation in turn affects their own interpretations of the fishery needs to be examined.

For many people in the community structural changes in the fishery are perhaps understood as the contrived machinations of government intervention and regulation. Most people understand the crisis discourse as having developed through the effects of big business and government regulation, rather than in terms of fishing as a way of life. It is thus an external and largely artificial characterization of local experience.

During the period of my research I met with four women in the community who were deckhands on their husband's fishing boats. While this number is small enough to make the claim of a statistical trend dubious, the similarities in the way these women portrayed their situations to me, and the way others in the community spoke about the women, seems to demonstrate that this new practice has developed out of a cultural logic and is perceived as being neither anomalous nor random. The fact that there was a great degree of ambivalence within the community towards this practice seems to indicate that understandings of the fishery in general, and of women's involvement in it, are changing. Many people ambiguously described the practice as "clever", stating that the families must be "doing well for themselves."[11] The

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[11] In my fieldnotes I kept close records of people's responses to women fishing with their husbands, noting that it came up in conversation on 23 occasions, 13 of which people described it as 'clever', and 8 speculated that the parties involved "must be doing well for themselves". Others described

reasons for this ambiguity and ambivalence in regards to this practice are many. Some people are sceptical because of previous knowledge or rumour of fraudulent Employment Insurance claims[12]. Others doubt whether the women are physically capable of doing the work, and others expressed uneasiness over gender boundaries, and whether women ought to be fishing.

The extent to which women in differing places and in differing situations contribute to the fishing economies and to fishing households, has been pointed out by many maritime anthropologists (Neis, 1998;Thompson, 1985; Nadel-Klein and Davis, 1988). Often women's contributions to the fishery are not formally counted, and sometimes unrecognised. The practice of fishing on boats can disrupt culturally defined and structurally reproduced conceptions of gender, and the gendered division of labour, associated with the fishery. As Grzetic points out regarding women fishing in Newfoundland:

> Women in fishing households have lived in a strange doubly occupied space for decades where their fishery work onshore and aboard boats has been essential to the success of the small-boat fisheries, but invisible and uncompensated by governments and institutions. With the current wave of restructuring, they have once again stepped up their efforts to secure family incomes from fishing. Since the 1980s, while men have been exiting the industry to retire or seek work elsewhere, the number of fisherwomen has been increasing. It is likely that as

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the practice as "smart", "greedy", "tough", and "not for everyone". Several men questioned the amount of work that the women put into their job as deckhand.

[12] In 1996 the federal government changed the Unemployment Insurance (now Employment Insurance) regulations to recognise women who fished with their husbands. EI does not recognise women whose work is strictly that of a ground crew worker.

> fish stocks become more scarce, costs associated with fishing increase, access to the fishing industry becomes more restricted through professionalisation and other measures, and women are seen as a cheap source of labour, their presence aboard fishing boats will continue to increase [Grzetic, 2004: 94].

According to Grzetic, changes to the fishery in Newfoundland shaped the choices available to women in fisheries households, that "in order to deal with the multitude of financial pressures and constraints on them, it was imperative that the income from the fishing enterprise stay in one household (Ibid:27)." While the women from Grzetic's study stated that they started fishing because they felt that they had no choice in the matter, the women with whom I spoke presented themselves in a far more proactive manner. They explained their reasons for fishing on relatively the same terms as the women of Grzetic's study, i.e. based on strategic planning to maximise household incomes, however, they all strongly expressed the fact that the choice was left up to them. Working as crew for their husband's boats meant that the catch would be pooled within the household, rather than split between the skipper and deckhand. In addition, in the off-season both the husband and wife would qualify for Employment Insurance. Comparatively speaking, households where husband and wife fish together had a greater combined income than other fishing households.

The four women with whom I spoke said they fish only on their husband's inshore boats, and none said they would consider fishing with

anyone else. All of the women were deckhands for their husband's crew, which generally consisted of a husband/wife pairing, with an added crew member during peak fishing times (November/ December). The extent of the work that they carried out on the boat varied. While two of the women, stated that they only contributed minimally and did not even attempt to be equal to other (i.e. male) deckhands, the other two stressed that they were almost equal to other deckhands in terms of tasks they were able to do, and the amount of time they contributed to fishing. The latter women considered themselves dedicated fishermen, while the former said they were taking advantage of an opportunity that had arisen which would allow them to maximize family income . All the women associated this work closely to their relationship to their husband stating that they were 'helpers', indicating their marginal and subservient position in the fishing.

4.1: Why are women fishing? Differing views from within the community

While the practice of women fishing in Lockeport and the surrounding area was not unheard of, it was described by most as being taken up out of necessity, an anomalous and even somewhat disruptive practice that occurred due to unfortunate circumstances. The examples of women who had taken up fishing in the past were presented to me almost poetically. When

the subject arose I was consistently presented with an image of an unfortunate woman out at sea alone in her skiff, struggling to provide for her family: there were never any examples of women fishing with their husbands. When pressed as to how many women had been fishing in the past generations, answers were vague and people who did have specific memories mentioned one woman who was widowed in the 1957 gale. One speculates that the reason why this particular example was most prominent in people's memory is that she continued to fish until old age, rather than the examples of other women who would take it up as a temporary means of getting by. Nonetheless, there was a sort of precedent set in regards to when and why women would fish. In spite of the much touted 'superstition' that women were considered bad luck on boats (much in the same way one wouldn't paint one's boat blue, as well as a string of other such prohibitions), it was considered acceptable, even normative, for a woman - of sufficient strength and determination, and with no kin with the means to provide her and her family support - to take up fishing (in the inshore fishery) if presented with unfortunate circumstances. In general, the expectation was that this practice was only temporary, insofar as it was seen as compromising for women to take up such work.

Within Lockeport there were multiple perspectives as to whether women fishing was a new practice. Some made reference to women fishing in the past, while others considered it to be a new practice. A few others made a

distinction between the practice of women fishing (i.e. women as fishermen), and the fact that there were a few in the community who did fish with their husbands. The women who fished with their husbands were not really fishermen, as one man asserted, "They do it for the stamps. And besides, they don't really do the work right. They fish with their husband because he can take care of her." It is this discordance about the practice that demonstrates the multiple ways in which fishing is understood. For different people in the community, the practice of fishing is intertwined with other aspects of community and household life, rather than simply the productive 'actions' themselves.

The reasons for people's differing interpretations most likely hinge on their views as to the central issues regarding women fishing. While those who claim that women did fish in the past are historically correct, others who claim that the practice is new, would counter my presenting this historical fact, with the argument that while there may have been women fishing in the past, it was considered unusual or anomalous, whereas women fishing now is generally accepted as normal, though in a restricted sense. In this sense then, those who see women fishing as 'new', demonstrate that this practice today has transformed (in their eyes) from a temporary practice in unfortunate times, to a normative part of the fishery. It is interesting to note, however, that this group was significantly smaller than either of the

other groups, indicating that the acceptance of women fishing as a normal occupation for women is far from dominant in the community.

4.2: Why are women fishing? Differing views from the women themselves

While the reflections of differing people within the community in regards to the practice of women fishing show how it has been received, the reflections of the women themselves present the rationale of the practice. As might be assumed, all of the women presented highly pragmatic and practical reasons as to why they started fishing. As one woman told me: "fishing is a 'job' isn't it? So I thought, 'why shouldn't I go fishing... if I can hack it." Engaging in fishing however, has caused them to reflect somewhat on issues of gender, and on what fishing is. One of the women provided an extended narrative of her experiences and thoughts about her fishing with her husband, which I have divided into several sections and provided annotation for:

> Linda: Is it just recently that women have been fishing with their husbands?
>
> Angela: I, really don't know... see there's some of 'em that went and got caught because they were just going to get their stamps and they got caught, so I don't know how long women's actually been goin'. Now the girl I know that's probably been goin'... we okay, there's a cousin of mine I think she went even with her father so... and now she goes with her husband so she's probably

> been going, like, for at least ten years, if not more. And my friend down the road, I think she has been going for ten years, because I... well, see I don't know how long she's been doing it for.

Angela's response as to when women started fishing reflects how pervasive the scepticism about the practice is. She attempts to gauge her response in terms of how long the women who are presently (and legitimately) fishing with their husbands have been doing so. Angela's cousin, Valda, also represents a challenge to the 'model' of how and why women choose to go fishing because, as she told me, she had been taught to fish by her father. Valda's father had no sons to help him with the fishing, so he decided to take Valda along with him.

> Angela: I think when her husband bought his license and her girl was old enough she started going. Yeah ... I don't know 'cause, like I said I really wasn't around it a lot when I was younger. I mean it's strange because you live in a town like this, and I had uncles that did it but, as a kid you didn't really pay attention to all that.
> But then, like, we landed traps, we landed them and they, like, will help if they see it, they will come and help us. But I mean there are some that are sexist because they don't think women should be on the boat. Yeah I've had them say that to me they say like 'oh your boyfriend is terrible for taking you away in the boat.' Is he terrible for taking me away from a minimum wage job? I'm happy. Like I said, I think its a great opportunity for any couple because then he doesn't have to get someone else to go out on and he pays me, and, like, it helps you pay your bills, it helps you.

In contrast to Valda's upbringing, Angela says she had no real contact and no interest in the fishery. This is perhaps because as a woman her future was

only tangentially tied to the fishery. After her comment on her lack of interest in the fishery growing up, she then jumps to a description of her experience fishing, during which she is still very much treated as a woman. She expresses some frustration with other men's failure to recognise the opportunity that fishing provides for her and her husband, and the rigidity of their sense of gender roles.

> Angela: Like I work, I'm one of the women that will work, right, and as far as I know a lot of the women around here do work and, like, not just sit there and get someone else to go. Like they actually will work and do their share of work on the boats... Some women got caught saying they were going lobstering when they wasn't and their husbands were paying them cause then they would collect unemployment. And I know one woman did get caught. I've heard tell of a few women that ... but I mean I guess I don't know how long that's been going on but, that's why I don't, like they probably, that's why people say 'oh a woman goin' ...Anyone that's been around us knows that I actually do work. Like I said there's always folks around us and they see if there are two of us on the deck of the boat they see I'm working... I'm the youngest, twenty six, another girl's probably around thirty-four, thirty-five, the other's in her early thirties and I'm not sure maybe they're all in their thirties.
>
> Linda: Do any of them have kids?
>
> Angela: Uh, they all do, except me. One girl, the woman down the road she's got one that just turned um 16, but her mother lives right beside her so when she was a little girl she would just get up in the morning and go to her place. And I think that my cousin she's got a 6 year old and a 16 year old so I'm assuming that he probably looks after the little one so they can go off to school. And the other one's got kids that are older now. She's just got into it, like, not very long ago. So she didn't go when her kids were small. And I think my cousin didn't go for a time when her oldest wasn't big enough to look after the little one...

There are two points which prejudice people against recognising the work of the women who go fishing with their husbands: the problem of women in the past who have fraudulently claimed to be fishing so as to claim EI, and the question in people's minds as to their ability to actually do the work. There is also the issue of the women fulfilling their other roles as wives and mothers, which are managed by all the women in different ways, none of which are seen as neglectful to their children.

> Angela: There really isn't much else that's as good. Unless you go away to school. And the thing about going away to school is you have to be willing to more or less move away from here, because there are no other jobs here. I mean that's what I was going to do but then its a lot of money so you gotta know what you want to do. You have to move away basically. Like, there's minimum wage jobs, like what I did. My sister, I have a twin and she started off minimum wage and then went to community college and then worked her way up to an assistant manager with the courses that they offer. Or a waitress. Most of my friends are waitressing, or doing the same things I did, like working at convenience stores. Really here there is not a lot going on... And it's not much different for men. I mean everyone can work at the plant, but they pay hourly and they pay, I mean to me 11 dollars an hour is good money. If you can get the hours to go with it, but uh, there's just not much opportunities here. Fisheries is not secure at all, they don't get steady hours... And, you know, it's good.

The cultural rule of men fishing has come into conflict with the rule that one should live where they were born. Angela's reluctance to move away has significantly restricted her choices for employment. While most of the women

her age are stuck in minimum wage jobs, Angela's husband presented her with an opportunity that in her eyes is far better than any other.

> Angela: He gaffs the buoy because I have a hard time gaffing the buoy, and then I'll take the gaff from him, he works the hauler, and we both pull the trap in and then I'll bait it. He'll take the lobsters out and I'll help to, um, clean the trap and put it on the deck and depending on if they're ready and he'll say 'okay, let it go.' He's probably easier on me than most, like there's some skippers that don't do any work. The deckhand does it all. He's easy on me. It's still hard work, it's hard for women ....I got sea sick when I first started out but then after that not at all. It bothers me when the men say, 'did you get sick out there?' 'No!' they expect it and one time I got so frustrated I just said 'I didn't get seasick, did you?', because you know they just expect it 'cause your a woman...
> I think it comes a little bit from, I don't know how many men think women actually do work, they're just there to get their unemployment. There's just people that think it's, I probably, well ... you've got to deal with winter. You know what winter is like, it's cold, you've got snow and ice, you've got everything. So it is hard on anyone, so they think a 'why would you let your wife or girlfriend or a woman go out in that?' So I think there's some of 'em that, like, one guy's told me he'd never take his wife out there. And I'm like, 'why not, right? There's bad weather, but a man can take it so...'
> My other friends aren't interested in fishing 'cause it's a man's job. My father has told me that it's a man's job, like, not to be sexist but it *is* a man's job because it is, it's a very physical job and it has always been a man's job. And I think its great for a husband and wife to do it now because it leaves more money for the household, it's helping each other rather than pay someone else 20 odd thousand dollars a year.... But like I said I've been to parties where someone will say this or that about the whole thing, but the fishermen generally will be helpful. ...
> My sister would go but she can't cause she gets seasick. But in general I don't think, well I pretty much know for a fact that I don't think any man's just gonna take a woman. It would have to be his girlfriend or wife because I can't see just any old man hiring a woman for a deckhand. I don't *ever* see that actually.

> But I think generally the husband is not gonna push the woman as much as the skipper is gonna push another deckhand. They're gonna help out to make sure your okay. I've never seen someone who's gonna hire a woman to be a deckhand.

The gendered terrain of the fishery, and of fishing, is something Angela has to negotiate on a daily basis, not just off shore, but on shore as well. She readily admits that fishing is 'a man's job' and is extremely physically demanding, but on the other hand she strives against the stereotypes about women's capabilities. While Angela, and the other women who fish with their husbands, treated fishing as an opportunity open to men and women – though open to women via their men – they have maintained a gendered terrain within the work, though it is different than in the past.

Previous portrayals of women fishing – doing so out of circumstance – presented Angela, and the other women in Lockeport who fish, an opportunity. The restructuring of the fishery and the increasing limitations placed on inshore fishermen was interpreted as being similar to these previous types of occasions where a woman would take up fishing; a sentiment echoed in Grzetic's findings (2004). An important factor in the development of this opportunity is the position of the husband: all of the women described their husbands as being more egalitarian than the average, and particularly supportive. They all remarked on how this opportunity developing was entirely reliant on their husband's position.

As Angela stated, of the four women who had been fishing with their husbands only one had been fishing for more than a decade. In addition, two of the women had small children, one of whom put her child in the care of her mother (who lived next door) while she was fishing with her husband, and the other had an older child who cared for his little brother. Angela had no children, and Mary started fishing when her children were old enough to mind themselves. All of the women have found a way to balance their roles as mothers and wives, and the expectations associated with them, with their roles as fishers. While Grzetic describes the women in her research based in Newfoundland as feeling as though they were forced into fishing, the women with whom I spoke generally described their experience as having been presented to them as an opportunity. They described themselves as being a particular type of woman, pointing out that many women in the community wouldn't fish with their husbands no matter how dire the situation was. The four women fishing in Lockeport described themselves as good wives, and good mothers, and did not see their fishing as interfering with these roles in a practical or symbolic sense.

An important point worth noting is how they view themselves within the fishery now that they have chosen to fish. While treating fishing as just a job may have allowed them the choice of fishing in the first place, it is much more difficult to treat it as such when actually engaged in the practice of fishing. There are realities that one can deny or elide in discourse that cannot

be treated as such in practice. Most of the women describe their role as that of 'helper' to their husband and do tasks on board that are more in line with gender norms than other tasks. Most of the women banded lobster, a task that is not without its difficulties but falls in line with what is considered work suitable for a woman to do. Only two of the women set and hauled traps, work which is considered strenuous and dangerous for women. Other tasks that they consistently carried out, and which were not considered strictly the task of the deckhand, was making coffee and lunches, and cleaning up the boat. Only one of the women said she had the skills to manage the boat on their own. This is similar to what Grzetic describes in her research in Newfoundland regarding the distinctions between numbers of women aboard fishing boats and numbers of women as professional fishers. The women who have started fishing in Lockeport did so because the opportunity arose under particular circumstances, and these circumstances shaped the way they viewed their fishing. Are they really 'fishing' or are they only 'helping out for now'? While two of the women have stayed away from and have no intention of ever getting involved with the professionalisation processes of fishing, such as licensing and navigation and engine maintenance, and see their engagement in fishing as temporary (though extended), the others have all considered to varying degrees their own professional status as 'fishermen', 'fisherwomen', or 'fisherpersons'.[13]

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[13] It is interesting to note that none of the women I spoke with referred to

4.3 Discussion

The structural changes to the fishery in the form of quota reductions and Fishing Employment Insurance regulations have altered some people's approaches toward making a living in the fishery. For a small number of people in Lockeport, these changes have provided an opportunity to increase household income by having wives fish with their husbands. Though people view the 'crisis' as being an external and artificial characterization of their experience, they nonetheless are willing to adopt new strategies that take advantage of this characterization.

Interpretations within the community regarding the practice of women fishing are varied. Some relate the practice of women fishing with their husbands today to the practice of women who would fish for their household under extreme and unfortunate circumstances. Others view it as a new practice because while women's fishing in the past was seen as anomalous, women fishing with their husbands today is acceptable and normal. Yet others argue that these women are not really fishermen and thus the issue is moot. These differing views on the practice of women fishing with their husbands suggests that it is challenging people's understandings of what the fishery is. There is a sense in which the gendered terrain of the fishery – where fishing is typically viewed as a man's job – is being renegotiated to some degree.

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themselves as 'fish-harvesters' a professionalised term.

The four women who have chosen to fish with their husbands presented their situation to me in a way which demonstrates the ambiguities of practice and its dialectical role with discourses and narrative. They described their rationale for fishing by both degendering it and reproducing gender within it at the same time. For some, Brenda and Mary, fishing is just a 'job', that they are only doing to help out their families for now. In a sense, they have extended their roles within the household onto the fishing boats. For Angela and Valda, however, fishing is a career choice of sorts, an opportunity which they are aware has been presented to them via the men in their lives (fathers, and/ or husbands). Angela and Valda are constantly negotiating the gendered terrain of their practice in a way that Brenda and Mary do not. Brenda and Mary see themselves as 'helpers', while Valda and Angela work to earn the reputation as deckhands, albeit women deckhands. Though they view their situations somewhat differently, all of the women describe themselves as being of a certain type in town, thereby recognising that the practice of fishing on any level is gendered and that they are therefore always in some sense disrupting gender norms.

It will be interesting to see if other women choose to start fishing with their husbands in the future. Even amongst the four women who have decided to fish with their husbands, there are differing ways that they interpret their practice. Valda and Angela hold a relatively marginal position within the Lockeport fishery, and yet they have won over quite a few men to

recognise their capabilities as a deckhand. These women demonstrate how the external crisis discourse has interpolated with local perceptions of the fishery and somewhat transformed practices associated it.

Concluding Remarks

The local conceptions of the fishery in the coastal community of Lockeport, Nova Scotia, as presented in this thesis are different from the conception of the fishery presented in the wider fisheries crisis discourse. This is because the people of Lockeport understand the fishery in terms of their own everyday practices and experiences, rather than in abstract economic terms. That people in Lockeport do not generally articulate their experiences and understandings of the fishery in terms of crisis does not mean that the wider crisis discourse has not interpolated with their own practices and discourses.

The example of Women's Fishnet demonstrates one way in which these two interpretations of the fishery have interacted with each other. The CRIAW researchers presumed a crisis state, and hence a latent necessity to change, existed within the community based on how the women of the community responded during the interviews and focus group sessions. They did not contend with the possibility that openness of the women at that time would not be duplicated later with Fishnet and hence would not be acted on by many of the women in Lockeport. The independence that so many people in Lockeport prize has the result of keeping a tight and unified household. To create a critical discourse on gender in the community would undermine both

this sense of independence and the unity of relations, which are distinctly gendered, within the household.

The example of the relatively new practice of women fishing with their husbands demonstrates an other way in which the two interpretations of the fishery have interpolated. The simplistic economic model of the fishery presented in the crisis discourse allowed for a restructuring of the fishery through policies that placed significant strain on the inshore fisherman's ability to manage his fishing enterprise. Some have utilised this presentation of crisis in the fishery in negotiating new or different strategies, such as that of women fishing with their husbands. Interestingly, while Grzetic presents the case of women fishing with their husbands as being forced in order to reproduce the household, the husband and wife teams who have chosen to fish together in Lockeport present their situation proactively: they have seized an opportunity that was open to them.

The fact that the field research on which my thesis is based was only a nine week period is a significant limit to this study. My familiarity with the day-to day experiences of people in the community was generally superficial. In addition, the seasonality of life in a fishing community plays a big part in people's lives, something which I caught only a glimpse of. It is probable that my contact with Fishnet limited the potential for me to establish relations with the women in the community who worked in the fishplant, as I was associated with Fishnet by others after the first week of my arrival.

I also believe that the experience, and memory, of crisis changes with time, and therefore I cannot rule out the possibility that the people of Lockeport may have experienced crisis in the past, particularly when the National Sea plant closed, but that once the crisis was resolved, it is no longer remembered as crisis. Regardless, their perspective as they presented it to me is not undermined by such considerations.

These questions and considerations bring forth the issue of the relationship of experiential knowledge in ethnographic methods and theoretical knowledge. In what sense is the 'knowledge' passed on by the work of others reliable and useful in one's own theoretical formulations and questions? In what way is knowledge in the human sciences 'accumulated'? It was through reading theoretical interpretations of what has been called the North Atlantic Fisheries Crisis that as an inexperienced graduate student I conceptualised my research project, and in turn anticipated what I might find in the community that I had chosen to do this research on the 'fisheries crisis'. Indeed, it was the theoretical understandings of the fisheries crisis rather than any practical understanding of life in an Atlantic Canada coastal community that drew me to my research project. Yet I came to discover that the theoretical interpretations of the crisis were foreign to the everyday experience of the community members. Likewise, I question the usefulness of my 'findings' about people's experience and the description of Lockeport's

fishery for anyone else's research. I feel that the knowledge I have gained in regards to Lockeport's fishery is historically embedded in it's people's experiences, and therefore should be treated as such: my research cannot be generalised outside of the framework of their experiences and interpretations.

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